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Borrowed Silence: a History of the Practice of Retreat in the Church of England

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Summary

This thesis, which is the first attempt to write about the growth of retreats, deals with a rather sidelined but important development in the history of spirituality. It states when, how and why the practice of retreat was adopted and adapted in the Church of England after having been a devotion in the Church of Rome since the time of the Catholic Reformation and how it has developed since.

It is divided chronologically into three major sections. The first tells the story of its adoption in 1858 by a group of Anglo Catholics in the form of the preached retreat and its subsequent spread to a small number of adherents, despite meeting opposition from Evangelical Christians. The second tells of the influence of a Jesuit brother, Charles Plater, and how after the First World War a number of Diocesan retreat houses were opened, the use of which continued to rise until after the Second World War. The third takes the story up to our present day with its adaptation to the needs of the present search for faith, its decline accompanying the present loss in membership in the churches whilst at the same time its adoption in various forms by non-Anglican groups. In particular it contains a history of the Society of Retreat Conductors. All the time comparison is made with what was happening in the Church of Rome.

There are resonances with the history of the Victorian church, the attitude of the established church to the working classes, evangelism, the changing fortunes of Anglo Catholicism, the ecumenical movement and New Age Christianity. It is of interest to all who are concerned about spread of religious faith today.

Preface

I acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr Chris Partridge who first saw the possibilities of the project, Dr Stephen Parker who was my supervisor for a year, Dr Andrew Dawson who first taught me what research was all about, to Dr Tom Greggs who has done much more than a second supervisor should ever do, and Dr Wayne Morris who has been a very encouraging first supervisor and who has seen my work through to completion. Also I thank my readers who have commented on the work as it has progressed and especially Richard Thorneycroft who has been an assiduous proof reader and has made some very pertinent remarks. I am indebted to many people, some of whom are mentioned in the text, who have shared with me the fruit of their rich experience. My thanks are due to the University of Chester who have given a grant to meet the fees for this research, to the Society of Retreat Conductors who made a contribution to the inevitable additional costs, to the Gladstone Library for many hours enjoying the facilities and to the British Library whose staff work hard in support of academic research. My thanks are due to the Revd Alan Pyke whose interest kept the project going through a serious down-patch in health. Above all to my wife, Ruth, who has been critically supportive throughout the whole eight year project and who has helped me through a period of illness when I felt like not completing it.

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|---|
| APR | Association for the Promotion of Retreats |
| Archway | An Association of Christian Retreat Houses. Formerly the Anglican Retreat House and Conference Centre Wardens Association |
| ARLYB | Anglican Religious Life Year Book |
| AYPA | Anglican Young People's Association |
| BURG | Baptist Union Retreat Group |
| CARM | Creative Arts Retreat Movement |
| CCR | Church Congress Report |
| CE | Catholic Encyclopedia |
| CEMS | Church of England Men's Society |
| CHN | Community of the Holy Name |
| CLB | Church Lads Brigade |
| CLJ | Companions of the Love of Jesus |
| CofE | Church of England |
| CofEYB | Church of England Year Book |
| CNRS | Catholic Network for Retreats and Spirituality |
| CR | Community of the Resurrection |
| CSJB | Community of St John the Baptist |
| CSMV | Community of Saint Mary the Virgin |
| Defra | Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs |
| Exx | Saint Ignatius Loyola's <i>Spiritual Exercises</i> |
| GFS | Girls Friendly Society |
| IGR | Individually Guided Retreat |
| MR&SN | Methodist Retreat and Spirituality Network |
| MRG | Methodist Retreat Group |
| n.d. | no date |
| NRA | National Retreat Association |
| NRC | National Retreat Centre or National Retreat Council |
| NRM | National Retreat Movement |
| OED | Oxford English Dictionary |
| RA | Retreat Association |
| RC | Roman Catholic |
| RHW | Retreat House Warden |
| SB | Sister of Bethany |
| SRC | Society of Retreat Conductors |
| SSF | Society of St Francis |
| SSC | <i>Societas Sanctae Crucis</i> or Society of the Holy Cross |
| SSJE | Society of St John the Evangelist |
| URCS&RG | United Reformed Church Silence and Retreat Group |
| w/ | website (see pp. 212-213 for complete list) |

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Chapter 1. Introducing the Thesis

In this thesis I attempt to answer this question: ‘When, how and why have some members of the Church of England adopted and adapted the Catholic Reformation practice of retreat?’ Coupled with this is a working hypothesis which has shaped both the selection of evidence and the form in which the thesis has been written up. It is this: ‘Developments in the Anglican practice of retreat have usually been stimulated by new initiatives in the use of the *Spiritual Exercises* within the Roman Catholic Church.’

Archbishop Rowan Williams began the 2008 Lambeth Conference with a three-day long retreat held in the solemn splendour of Canterbury Cathedral. The assembled bishops were brought by buses each day to listen to thoughtful addresses by him and to spend the rest of the time in silent meditation on what he had said. The Archbishop was using a form of devotion which had been introduced into the Church of England exactly 150 years earlier by Revd Richard Benson, and it is now a familiar part of the Anglican way of life. It is the purpose of this dissertation to investigate the Roman Catholic forerunners of the retreat, to see to see what was happening in 1858 when it was adopted by the Church of England, and to ask how it has evolved since.

In this first chapter, after setting out what I mean by a retreat, I discuss the research question and why it is being asked before reviewing previous work in this area. I then defend the methodology which I have employed, introduce my sources and finally offer a rationale for the shape of the thesis as a whole.

A. What we mean by a retreat

Being quiet in the presence of God and mulling over the direction of one’s life or praising him, has from the earliest days always been part of the Christian life. Several times the gospels show Jesus himself withdrawing from the demands of his life in order to pray to his Father and this remained part of the behaviour of those who followed his example (Luke 4. 1-13; 4. 42; 6. 12; 9. 10; 9. 28; etc). In the centuries which followed the tradition was kept going by the

Desert Fathers and by monks, but the contemporary practice of making a retreat can be traced back directly to the year 1548. It was then that Ignatius of Loyola published the definitive edition of his *Spiritual Exercises* after twenty years of experience with them. His idea was that, under the personal guidance of an experienced director, a person would seek to discern and respond to the purpose of God for their life. They were to withdraw from the ordinary duties of daily life, if possible to somewhere away from home, to spend the time:

making spiritual exercises for one month or a little more or less; that is to say in examining his [sic] consciousness, turning over his whole past life and making a general confession, meditating upon his sins, and contemplating the steps and mysteries of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ our Lord, exercising himself in praying vocally and mentally according to the capacity of the person, as will be taught him by our Lord etc. *Constitutions, Examen* 4.9 [64] (Endean, 2008, p. 53).

Ignatius's small volume was a collection of resources intended for the use of 'the one who [was giving] the manner and order of meditating and contemplating' (*Exx.* 2).¹ Men and women from all levels of society made the *Exercises* either in whole or in part according to their intellectual and devotional capacity, and soon special houses were being erected to which they could withdraw to experience them without interruption.²

Over the next hundred years, as the Catholic Reformation was in full swing,³ because the number of people wanting to experience the *Exercises* was so great and there were too few people qualified to give them, the manner in which they were being given was changed. Ignatius had intended that they be offered only to people who had freely decided to undertake them and that they be adapted to meet the needs of each individual exercitant. In fact they were shortened to eight days at the most, and were given on a group basis with the conductor presenting the material through a series of addresses. Undertaking them became obligatory for some religious who were expected to repeat them

¹ Throughout this thesis, references to the *Exercises* use the paragraph numbers, first used in 1928, common in most modern editions (Fleming, 1978).

² For a full account of this period see the early chapters of George de Guibert's history of Jesuit spiritual doctrine and practice (de Guibert, 1972).

³ I am using the term 'Catholic Reformation' rather than 'Counter Reformation.' The latter is the more familiar but it has unfortunately strong political overtones which are not appropriate for our present study. We are concerned with a devotional development which occurred after the Council of Trent and which was not necessarily a reaction to Protestant teaching. (Randell, 1999).

annually, and the name given to them in France was *rétrait* (OED, 1989, Vol. 13, p. 790).

Not all welcomed this new devotion. Strong criticism of the method is to be found in Father Baker's *Holy Wisdom*, written in the 1630's, objecting to the imposition of the *Exercises* upon the contemplative nuns at Cambray (Baker, c1876, 3rd Treatise, 2nd Section, Chap. IV). He said that although the method might be useful for those at the early stages of mental prayer, it was detrimental to those who had reached the level of silent contemplation such as those who were in his charge. In a chapter entitled 'Of set Retreats for Meditation', he wrote of 'the yearly, quarterly, or otherwise appointed Retreats for more serious meditation' – probably the first time that the word 'retreat' was used in this sense in English. St Francis de Sales and St Vincent de Paul, whose lives were shaped by *Exercises*, both did much to promote their use in seventeenth-century France. It was their writings in particular which were to inspire a group of Anglican parochial clergy to introduce retreats into the life of Church of England in the 1850's.⁴

The word retreat then is:

the term normally given to a period spent in silence and occupied by meditation and spiritual exercises, under a conductor who leads the worship, gives the addresses, and makes appointments with any retreatants who desire confession, counsel, or discussion (Goodacre, 1983, p. 335).⁵

⁴ The First Part of De Sale's *Introduction to the Devout Life* is based upon the First Week of the *Exercises*, and the Fifth Part gives material for a private retreat lasting for a week. For a description of Vincent de Paul's retreats for ordinands see Pierre Coste, 1934, Vol. II, pp 157- 159, and for ecclesiastics Vol. III, pp 1 – 13. St Vincent defined a retreat as follows: 'By this word "Spiritual Retreat" or "Spiritual Exercises" we are to understand a cessation from all temporal affairs and occupations so that we may seriously devote ourselves to a clear knowledge of our inner life, to a careful examination of conscience, to meditation, contemplation, prayer and such preparation of soul as to purify ourselves from all sin, all evil habits and affections, to acquire an ardent love for virtue, to seek and to know the will of God, and, having known it, to submit, confirm and unite ourselves to it, and thus tend to advance and finally to arrive at our perfection,'(Coste, 1935c)

⁵ This is a convenient point to introduce some of the nomenclature which has developed to differentiate between the varieties of retreat practice which have grown up over the years. A 'private retreat' is one in which the individual retreatants make the retreat on their own, without the help of a leader, perhaps staying as the guest of a religious community. In a 'directed' or 'individually guided retreat' (IGR), the retreatants place themselves under the one-to-one direction of an experienced conductor, as Ignatius of Loyola suggested in his *Spiritual Exercises*. Retreats held in a retreat house are referred to as 'residential retreats' and those which are shared whilst the retreatants continue living in the world, given in accordance with Ignatius's 19th annotation, are called 'retreats in daily life'. A 'preached retreat' is the kind of retreat which had become standard in Catholic Europe before the 1650s. It is a group experience, during which the conductor gives a series of addresses in which he suggests topics which the retreatants are to consider during their times of private prayer. A 'closed retreat' is one held in a retreat house for a specific group of people, such as members of the Mothers Union. The term 'open retreat' is used in the literature in two ways. Firstly, it denotes a residential

Over the years, the word has been loosely applied in both ecclesiastical and secular circles to any period of temporary withdrawal, usually for spiritual purposes, and retreats now take many forms. The pattern described by Norman Goodacre is often referred to as a 'preached retreat', and it was in this form that the practice was introduced into the Church of England, and in which it continued to be offered with little change for the next 100 years.

B. The Research Question and its Originality

The research question grows out of a life-long experience of retreats. I have been retreatant, retreat giver, retreat house warden, and, for a period of three years, chair person of both the Association for the Promotion of Retreats and of the ecumenical Retreat Association. More recently, I have served on the Council of the Society of Retreat Conductors, and have had the painful duty of recommending to our members that we close our retreat house, Stacklands in Kent. This experience left me with a persistent question, which I find is being asked by others in the retreat movement, namely when, how and why did the practice of retreat evolve within the English church?

After a prolonged search through library catalogues, abstracts of theses, published papers and the indexes at the ends of volumes on the history of the Church of England and of others on Anglican spirituality, it appears that so far little work had been done in this area and no assessment has been attempted of the contribution which this form of devotion has made to the life of the Church.⁶ This is perhaps not surprising for the numbers taking part have been so small. As E. H. Carr pointed out, 'numbers count in history;' and the historical significance of an event depends upon the number of people affected by it (Carr, 1990, p. 50). Although no accurate statistics exist for the numbers of people making retreats, it

retreat which is open to all who book, and secondly, it is sometimes used of a non-residential retreat held in a Parish setting, when the participants live at home and come in to retreat sessions held in the quietness of the local church. This latter method is often also referred to as a 'parish retreat', but there is possible confusion here; the times when members of one parish spend time together in a retreat house are also described as a 'parish retreat.' However, the context should make clear the manner in which the term is being used.

⁶ It may be that this dearth of literature is not confined to the Anglican Church; no bibliography follows Anne Luther's article on retreats in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Luther, A, p. 540).

would appear that they have always formed a small minority of total church membership. For example, Gordon Lynch when addressing members of the Retreat Association in May 2008, suggested that perhaps only 1.6% of the population are involved in any kind of group activity, and that sympathy for spirituality in the wider population was aspirational and did not inevitably 'translate into sustained attempts at cultivating a personal spiritual life.' However, retreats in various forms are popular with some unattached seekers, as Kenneth Leech reported in 1980 and as the continuing sales of Stafford Whiteaker's interfaith *Good Retreat Guide* confirms (Leech, 1980 p. 179; Whiteaker, 2001). The study of these periods of retirement is therefore important, and it is easy to overlook this seemingly obscure aspect of Anglican devotion.

Also, until relatively recently, ecclesiastical historians, like their secular counterparts, have been primarily concerned with structures, influential people, parties and power, although some, such as Owen Chadwick in his justly admired *Victorian Church* (Chadwick, 1970), have given some attention to forms of piety. It has been unlikely therefore that devotional practice, including retreats, should attract their attention. This has left a gap in our understanding of the recent history of the established church and a body of sources which have not been investigated academically.

1. Is the Question worth asking?

Is the research question about the origins and development of the retreat movement worth answering? There are at least three reasons why it is potentially of wider interest than might at first appear. Firstly, as I have already indicated, from a pragmatic view point, this research has relevance to present concerns of the established church, in which times of spiritual withdrawal continue to be valued. For example, all those to be admitted in to the sacred ministry have been expected since the 1880's to take part in a retreat of three days duration immediately prior to their ordination and both clergy and laity are recommended to make one regularly (Ison, 2005, p. 17; Witcombe, 2005, p. 51). Further, at the moment some dioceses are investing large sums of money in the upgrading of their retreat houses to make them more suitable for modern purposes, although in

practice their use for retreats is decreasing. Again, as I will show towards the end of chapter 4, there is a growing recognition of the value of periods of withdrawal beyond the boundaries of the church, offering an opportunity for Christians to dialogue with spiritual seekers on common ground. All of this indicates that the practice is of contemporary relevance and it is important that our attempts to develop the practice should be guided by past experience as well as responding to present needs.

Secondly, we will find that the study of the history of Anglican retreats illuminates other areas of ecclesiastical history. For instance it provides examples of the working out of the principles of the Oxford Movement by a growing body of parochial clergy, of the anti-Papalism of Victorian church and society, of the church's attitude to the working classes in Edwardian times, of the changing fortunes of the Anglo-Catholic wing of the church, of the influence of Vatican II, of ecumenism in action during the later part of the twentieth century, and of relationships between the church and the New Age. Finding answers to the question 'how did retreats develop?' therefore has a contribution to make to wider academic concerns, not least to the understanding of relationships between the Anglican and Roman communions.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the study of the practice of retreat comes within a growing field of academic study known as 'Spirituality,' which merits a section on its own.

2. Spirituality

The impetus for the development of this new area has been provided, in part at least, by the phenomenon, well documented since the 1960's, of the declining membership of the mainline churches, certainly in Western Europe, accompanied by an alleged growing interest in spiritual issues and in a bewildering range of forms of spiritual exploration. This development is being researched and taught in many universities, and some would claim that this work has grown into a new academic discipline (Dreyer, 2005, p. VI).

The word 'Spirituality' has replaced what was known as 'Ascetical Theology.' The latter has been defined as the 'systematic analysis of the life of

grace under the Spirit in terms of the discipline and endeavours required of the ordinary believer to purify oneself of self-reference' (Tinsley, 1983, p. 45), and was typified by F P Harton's *The Elements of the Spiritual Life*, used as a text book for many years in Anglican theological colleges (Harton, 1932). 'Spirituality' is still concerned with ways of prayer and spiritual discipline but is not so much looking for systems of prayer as studying its inner heart and the styles of life, personal priorities and assumptions which go along with it. In this context, the word has therefore been defined as concerning 'the way in which prayer influences conduct, our behaviour and manner of life, [and] our attitudes to other people' (Wakefield, 1983). A retreat is one way of praying and is therefore suitable for study within this area of academic discipline.

3. Spiritual Traditions

We will be focusing in this thesis on three Christian spiritual traditions. The first is Benedictine Spirituality, which has as its root the Rule of St Benedict. Maria Boulding has summarised its characteristics as being 'scriptural, meditative, contemplative and fairly non-analytical in temper, normally embodied in a community life of prayer and work, lovingly respectful towards creation and productive of peace' (Boulding, 1983, p. 41). Its characteristic form of prayer is the *Opus Dei*, that is the offering of the seven offices each day based upon scriptural readings and the recitation of the Psalter. In a Benedictine house, this helps to 'create an atmosphere of silence, in which each individual can seek and come to experience God for him or herself.' Modern Benedictine Hospitality 'provides a place where one can go, rest and not be pressured, a place where prayers are said, but where there is no expectation that you join in the prayers' (Mills-Powell, 2007, pp. 7, 22). This tradition has therefore made a big contribution to the practice of retreat, although strangely enough there is little if any evidence of temporary periods of withdrawal before St Ignatius; before then, retirement from the world was for life.⁷

⁷ I am here quoting from an unpublished paper given by the medieval specialist Professor Sarah Foot to the Society of Retreat Conductors in 2008.

The second tradition is Ignatian Spirituality. The foundation document here is the *Exercises*, with its clear design, its psychological dynamic, and its basic conviction that God directly intervenes in daily life. Equally important was St Ignatius's dramatic break with the mainly Benedictine-inspired monasticism of the Middle Ages. His was to be a spirituality of service, Ignatius encouraging his followers to live it out in the world, instructing them to limit their prayer to half-an-hour a day as their work was not to be interrupted by the choir offices (O'Malley, 1996, pp. 1, 6, 7). Also characteristic of this tradition is the use of the *Examen*, a reflection each evening on the events of the day past in order to recognise where God has been at work, together with 'Discernment' which is the recognition of the movements of the Divine within one's life. It is the evolution of the use of the *Exercises* which has had a profound influence upon the practice of retreat.

The third Christian tradition which is important for this thesis is Anglican Spirituality. Characterised recently as 'A Passionate Balance' in Alan Bartlett's book of that title (Bartlett, 2007), Anglican theology and practice draws upon Catholic and Reformed teaching, and from Tradition and Scripture. It is maintained by Word and Sacrament, Prayer and Service, and by Reason and Inner Experience, and is expressed in the roles of the clergy and of the laity, both in local ministry through commitment to the parochial system and in faithfulness to the teaching and disciplinary role of the Episcopate. Rooted in the Book of Common Prayer, with its strong links to the Benedictine tradition, its distinctive devotional life is shaped by what Thornton called the Threefold Rule - the Daily Offices, the Eucharist and private prayer (Thornton, 1963, p. 76). Times of spiritual retirement were not unknown during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the practice of retreat was not part of Anglican Spirituality until the nineteenth century.

The research question is not therefore as peripheral as may at first appear as it is linked with contemporary problems and opportunities, with important themes in ecclesiastical history and with the modern study of Spirituality, both modern and traditional. Answering it will make an original contribution to

human knowledge both because it opens up a new area of study, and because, as I will shortly demonstrate, use will be made of a group of sources which have not been examined in detail before.

C. Literature Review

Although there is a reasonable body of literature about the practice of retreats today which I have used as the sources for my research, there appears to be little which deals with the origin and development of them. On the widest canvas, J. M. Lozano's substantial article in Mircea Eliade's *Encyclopedia of Religion* reviews their use in indigenous societies and in Hinduism and Islam, before summarising their history in the Christian Church (Lozano, 1987, p. 351). He finds precedents for the Christian practice in the Bible, an exposition developed at greater length by Brother Ramon (Ramon, 1987). Some of Ramon's examples are, to my mind, forced, for although scripture clearly testifies to the value of periods of spiritual retirement, it cannot be used to justify present retreat methods. Mayeul de Guibert records the way in which the use of the *Exercises* has evolved amongst Jesuits over the years in the course of his history of Ignatian spirituality up to the 1960s, and the story of how formality had changed to flexibility by the late 1990's is told in an article by Joseph Tetlow (de Guibert, 1972; Tetlow, 1999).

De Guibert's account is helpfully summarised in the second chapter of an unpublished Masters dissertation by Barry Smith, who examines how the *Exercises* were received into the English Reformed Tradition (Smith, 1991). This is the only extended work which I have found whose subject is closely comparable with my own, and it both fills in some of the background to my work and, in its last three chapters, follows a similar chronological framework to that used by myself. Smith in Chapter 3 takes up the main theme of his dissertation, namely the reception of the *Exercises* in England. He considers at length the *Spiritual Directory* written by the turbulent English Jesuit Robert Parsons after he himself had received the *Exercises* in France (pp. 67-78), which was to influence Robert Leighton, Archbishop of Glasgow, whose *Rules and Instructions for a Holy Life* show many links with the Exercises (pp. 78-84). Perhaps most surprisingly, Parsons' work caught the attention of Richard Baxter

who strongly advocated the practice of meditation to his Puritan readers in the fourth book of his *Saints Everlasting Rest* (pp. 84–90). Following Louis Martz, Smith also finds evidence of a knowledge of Ignatian meditation in the form and themes of the English devotional poetry of Southwell, Donne and Herbert, where ‘meditation meets poetry’ (pp. 90–92), an interpretation of the evidence shared by Louis Bouyer (Martz, 1954, p. 21; Bouyer, 1969, p. 115). It would seem to me, however, that the Ignatian influence was probably limited, and certainly the Exercises were never given in this country for the first 300 years apart from Jesuits giving them to each other and perhaps secretly to recusants (Mursell, 2001, Vol. 1, p. 343). Further, although Anglicans were encouraged to meditate by Bishop Joseph Hall and others, such devotion revealed a tendency to be intellectual in character with the purpose of stimulating moral reform (Hall, 1837, Vol. VI, pp. 47–85). This contrasts with Ignatius’ use of the imagination and of the senses with the aim of leading the exercitant to greater attachment to the person of Christ. Anglicans did not at this time speak of a ‘retreat,’ except when referring to what was happening in France (OED, 1989, Vol. 13, p. 790), but, as in William Law, of ‘times of spiritual retirement’ (Law, 1978, p. 218). When Hooker every Ember week obtained the door key of his parish church from the parish clerk so that he could retire to it for prolonged periods of prayer (Grislis, 2005, p. 256), or when clergy came to stay for a week at a time to join with the Ferrar family in their life of prayer at Little Gidding (Maycock, 1938, p. 217), they were withdrawing from daily routines for devotional purposes, but were not strictly speaking making a retreat by using the *Exercises*.

It is from this point on that Smith’s dissertation and my thesis move in parallel, although he is more sharply focused upon the use of the *Exercises* than I am. He recognises the significance of the same three periods in the growth of the practice of retreat which I have identified in my study whilst not delineating them as sharply as I do. In the first period, (Chapter 4 – 1858 onwards), he concentrates on Pusey and Benson, barely mentioning others who were involved in the emerging retreat movement. He seems to assume that Pusey led the retreat for clergy held in his home in June 1856, but it may be that he merely hosted it. Certainly, this retreat did not follow the Ignatian pattern, as did the first

communal retreat conducted by Benson at Cuddesdon in 1858. Smith rightly emphasises the significance of Pusey's promotion of the devotional literature of the Catholic Reformation in general and of the *Exercises* in particular. This he contrasts with Benson's unhappiness with the tendency of Anglo-Catholics to adopt uncritically devotional practices which sprang from that period, 'taking his stand far more on Biblical devotion, as had Ignatius' (p. 112).

In the second period of the evolution of retreats (Chapter 5 – 1912 onwards), Smith rightly recognises the importance of Charles Plater's *Retreats for the People* although I will argue that its impact was wider ranging than he realises (pp 120–122). He emphasises the significance of W. H. Longridge's promotion of the Ignatian approach and the great value of his scholarship in producing what became for some forty years the definitive English translation of the *Exercises*. However, in my judgement Longridge's literalist use of the text caused the material which he produced for the guidance of lay and priestly retreats to be too rigid for popular use (pp. 122–130). I do not think that the 1914 report of the Bishop of Rochester's Committee on 'Retreats, Quiet Days and Half Days for Laity' was 'of crucial importance in promoting retreat work in the Church of England' but it certainly reflected a growing awareness and interest at the time (p. 130). Smith records the foundation of the Society of Retreat Conductors (SRC) in 1924, rightly stressing its potential importance as the only body in the Church of England committed to the provision of Ignatian Retreats. However in my view the narrowness of its approach and its position on the extreme Catholic wing of the church greatly limited its eventual influence upon the Anglican retreat movement as a whole (Smith, 1991, pp. 132-135).

The Society's work continued into the third period (Chapter 6 - 1960 onwards), which saw, as Smith records, 'the rediscovery of the Individually Guided Retreat (IGR) in the Roman Catholic Church and this has transformed the retreat' (p. 142-144). Here Smith rightly comments that SRC tended to get left behind, continuing to concentrate on the preached retreat but I do not accept that the Society was hampered by the inflexibility of its house at Stacklands in Kent which had been specifically designed for this method; in fact it proved to be ideal for IGRs (Smith, 1991, p. 150). Further, he does not give credit to the fact

that some of the early Anglican IGRs were held there and that a significant number of the Society's members were, and still are, involved in the giving of training courses in modern methods of retreat giving and spiritual direction.

When he wrote it, Smith's work was the only account of his subject. Its great strength is his detailed analyses of some of the key works produced by Anglicans and others which related to the *Exercises*. Its weakness, no doubt due to the limitations of a Master's dissertation, is that, apart from the first chapter, he fails to relate his material to its historical context.

The more recent history of the Anglican retreat movement is the subject of two further, briefer studies, both unpublished. The first is Rachael Lampard's Oxford undergraduate dissertation on the early history of the Association for Promoting Retreats (APR) from 1913 to 1930, which is preserved in the archives of that organisation (Lampard, 1993). This was a pioneering research for, as she writes, 'as there has been no prior study of this area, there is no definite corpus of work on retreats in this period' (Lampard, 1993, p.1). Using the APR archives as her main source, she outlines the historical context within which that organisation was founded. It was in 1913, in the drawing rooms of Bloomsbury, when a group of Anglo-Catholic priests and affluent ladies, inspired by Plater's book, believed that retreats could be an important way in which the church could reach out to the working classes. The problems and opportunities which led to the transformation of the task of the Association from that of running retreat houses to that of promoting the method within the wider church are well described by her. Lampard analyses the membership of the first committees, raising the important issues of the middle/upper class domination of this form of devotion, and she also identifies some of the changes in church and society which encouraged the growth of retreats at this time. However, she fails to question the unrealistic idealism of the founders nor does she deal with the wider, often critical, reactions to the growing influence of the Anglo-Catholic movement. Although carried out at undergraduate level, this is a very competent piece of original research, and has provided a useful starting point for some of my own work presented in Chapter 3.

There is finally a short MA dissertation submitted in 2004 by Catherine Bryant. Looking at the experience of a number of Anglican and Roman Catholic Houses, Bryant considers the ways in which styles of retreats have developed over the past fifty years, and how these reflect changes in society. I would question some of her conclusions. For example, she claims that during this period, the number of retreatants markedly increased and so did the number of retreat houses (Bryant, 2004, p. 61). In fact, no one has yet gathered the statistics needed to support the first of these claims, and my impression is that, after a peak in attendance in the 1960's, numbers have since declined. Although an encouraging number of new houses have opened, these often accommodate just a few guests whilst a significant number of larger houses have closed for financial reasons. It is doubtful therefore that there has been any increase in the number of retreatants. Further, she rightly records that a priest is no longer the necessary choice as a retreat conductor as he was in previous centuries, and that lay men and women are often used in this role. She attributes this to a decline in respect for authority in modern society, but I would suggest that this development reflects the growth in lay ministry in the church as a whole, so that some lay people are now being trained especially for retreat work. She is right in noting the increase in the number of IGRs, and that this reflects a current interest in personal growth. As she says, the retreat conductor is not seen in this kind of retreat as an authority figure but rather as a counsellor and a wise friend (Bryant, 2004, p. 62). Her dissertation concludes with the results of an informal survey of the attitudes of people in her local church to retreats, revealing a sad ignorance of them, an area to which I return towards the end of this thesis (Bryant, 2004, p. 50).

This survey confirms my earlier statement that there has been little work done directly relating to how and why retreats developed and that my work is needed. What are the appropriate methods for uncovering this development?

D. Methodology

Retreats could be studied in a number of ways. One might use the phenomenological approach employed in the Study of Religion. We refer to 'the practice of retreat', and this is something which is done and can be watched, described and classified by the observer who, in an empathetic manner, tries to make sense of what he sees (Erricker, 1999; Partridge, 2005). Or one might approach it theologically, examining the biblical precedents, or perhaps relating it to contemplative prayer or to the study of religious experience. Or we could adopt an historical approach, a methodology which Bernard McGinn argues is particularly suitable for the study of spirituality and which he employs so successfully in his ongoing volumes on Western mysticism (McGinn, 1991-).

It is in fact the last of these approaches which is demanded by the research question which asks; When, how and why did retreats develop? It is the set of methods employed by historians which enable us to collect and assess the data arising from a given area of human activity; to identify links and causes within that activity; and so to answer, albeit only ever in part, the questions which present themselves to us. In particular, I will use these methods to investigate the dependence of Anglican retreat practice upon the prior changes within in the Roman Catholic system.

In this section I therefore explain my understanding of the nature of history, and then review the techniques and the sources which I have used to gather the data and to analyse it.

1. Historiography

The word 'history' has two meanings. Firstly, it denotes the past seen not just as a series of events, but 'understood as a single coherent, evolutionary process, when taking into account the experience of all peoples in all times' (Fukuyama, 1992, p. xii). In expressing this 'high' view of history, Francis Fukuyama was following Hegel and Marx who believed that history is not open ended but moves towards an inevitable goal. This approach now seems to be very fragile, as the 'End of History' which Fukuyama announced, namely the universal acceptance of the American capitalist, free market and democratic

model for organising society, appears to be further away than ever, and there are those who would question its advisability.

The second meaning of history is that it is the systematic study of the past attempting to understand the experience of previous generations so that we may be more aware of 'both continuity and difference, of context and of causes' (Tosh, 2002, pp. 30-34). In doing this, historians have become increasingly aware of the provisional nature of their work. As Fukuyama himself says, there are no privileged perspectives, no absolute view, for 'all horizons and value systems are relative to their time and place', and none are [absolutely] true but 'reflect the prejudices or interests of those who advance them' (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 306). The way in which historians are affected by their cultural environment and personal experiences is well illustrated by what Eamon Duffy has said about the experience of writing his seminal book *The Stripping of the Altars*. That book about the Reformation was influenced by Duffy's experience as a teenager of living through the changes of Vatican II. He writes:

My account of the English Reformation presented it less as an institutional and doctrinal transformation than a ritual one, 'the stripping of the altars': in retrospect, I see that the intensity of focus I brought to my task as an historian was nourished by my own experience of another such ritual transformation.

This does not invalidate his work; rather the book has revolutionised our understanding of the Reformation in this country because of the new perspectives given to him by his experience. To a lesser extent, my writing of the history of the retreat movement is coloured by my own experience of it over the past 50 years, and this is to be taken into account.

This post-modern view of history, that there is no final definitive account of history and no great meta-narratives, has, for the purposes of this thesis, been adopted by me. The subjective nature of the process of writing history, of selecting the evidence and interpreting it, is clearly described by Carr, who sees it as a continuous interaction between hypothesis and data. He writes:

The historian starts out with a provisional selection of facts, and a provisional interpretation in the light of which the selection has been made... As he works, both the interpretation and the selection and

ordering of the facts undergo perhaps partly unconscious changes, through the reciprocal action of one or the other (Carr, 1990, p. 28).⁸

The historian's hypothesis guides his selection of materials which then re-shape his hypothesis, which then leads to the search for further evidence and so on. John Tosh again emphasises the subjective nature of the historian's work when he writes, 'At every stage both the direction and the destination of the enquiry are as much determined by the enquirer [his assumptions and values] as by the data' (Tosh, 2002, p. 178).

In the light of this, perhaps the definition which best reflects my position is that given by Rowan Williams, 'History is a set of stories which we tell in order to understand better who we are and the world we're in' (Williams, 2005, p. 1). In this thesis, I aim to tell the story as I see it of how the method of retreat has been accepted into the life of the Church of England from the Church of Rome. However the researcher cannot just tell any old story, but must attempt to ensure that it is as impartial as possible, and therefore the choice of research methods is vital. I therefore now introduce those which I have employed.

2. Methods

From the start, the gathering of information about the origin and subsequent development of the retreat method and the writing up of what was learnt went hand in hand (Carr, 1990, p. 28). It is in the process of writing that one begins to recognise the significance of what has been found and realises what yet needs to be unearthed. This has certainly proved to be an effective way of working.

Secondly, a testable hypothesis, linking continuing development of the use of the *Exercises* in the Roman and Anglican communions, emerged about halfway through the cycle of collecting and sifting data and then putting it into some kind of order, which then guided the subsequent selection of evidence and generated further questions (Tosh, 2002, p. 173). By the end of the process, the statement that evolution of Anglican practice was dependent upon prior Roman Catholic practice was found to be broadly true, giving some confidence that the

⁸ This cycle of interpretation and collection has been elaborated as a qualitative research method known as 'Grounded Theory' (Bryman, 2001, p. 390).

data had been selected on a rational basis. In particular, the hypothesis has determined the shape of the thesis as a whole.

Thirdly, I have made use of a wide range of relevant sources which confirm and challenge each other and which I will review and critique shortly. These are mainly documentary, but I also draw on oral evidence and information found on reliable web-sites as offering other points of view. This again helps to militate against too narrow an approach to the research question.

Fourthly, I have tried to follow E. P. Thompson's advice to interrogate this evidence with a mind 'trained in a discipline of attentive disbelief' and not to take it on face value (Tosh, 2002, p. 104). In the case of the particular group of sources which have been used, there have been few issues about the authenticity of the sources or about their relationship to the events which they have been describing. Although of different types they have been mainly produced by people convinced of the value of retreats, and therefore there are few dissenting voices, leading unfortunately to a pronounced bias in favour of the practice.

Fifthly, one carries out the research as an individual who, although working on ones own, is part of, dependent upon, and responsible to, the research community as a whole (Tosh, 2002, p. 179). I therefore begin each chapter with a brief historical survey relating my evidence and its interpretation to its historical context and to the work of other scholars, ensuring that the views expressed are not purely individualistic but relate to those which are accepted by the wider research community. Further, sections of it have been presented at various research seminars, including some organised by the Ecclesiastical History Society, as well as being submitted, successfully, to the judgement of editors of peer-reviewed journals. This exposure to wider scrutiny has encouraged and tested the objectivity of the work.

Sixthly and lastly, the data, analysis and conclusions are present in a rational, ordered and logical manner, as is demonstrated in the final section of this chapter. None of these six steps can eliminate the inevitable subjectivity of historical writing, but together they ensure some broader horizon beyond the narrow approach I would otherwise have.

3. Sources

I have used four methods for collecting and analysing data which are all widely employed today in the discipline of history. The first, which has been employed for the whole research period, is the systematic search of a selected group of written sources which I introduce shortly. The other methods are used only in chapter 4. They are secondly the collection of data by means of unstructured interviews with those engaged in the movement, thirdly information, particularly about retreat houses, found on the internet, and fourthly my own personal experience. This has the advantage of giving to the thesis an immediacy and motivation without losing a sense of my responsibility to be as objective as possible.

The primary task has been therefore to identify and analyse relevant written sources. I have in the main excluded archival material, with the exception of the records of the Society of Retreat Conductors which I am cataloguing and exploring on behalf of the Society. My reason for this decision is that the relevant archives are widely dispersed throughout the country in retreat houses, diocesan offices, the mother houses of religious communities and the offices of various societies and associations. The detailed investigation of them would take more time than has been available. For similar reasons, I have in the main not attempted to investigate church newspapers. The decision to exclude the archives has the advantage of reducing the large amount of available material to a size which is compassable within the relatively narrow limits of a thesis, but it also has disadvantages. For example, factors which led to the opening and closing of particular houses are not always in the public domain, and the knowledge of them might lead to a different emphasis in the accounts which are given below. However, the printed sources which I have explored are sufficiently diverse to allow a broad picture to emerge in which we can have some confidence.

This study of retreats then is mainly based upon a particular set of primary and secondary printed materials,⁹ not previously explored systematically, which are in the public domain and which fall into seven categories: books written to commend and explain the practice of retreat; collections of retreat addresses;

⁹ These are not distinguished in the Bibliography because some times a book falls onto both categories.

books of devotions to be used in retreat; semi-official reports; the APR journal *Vision*; biographies of people involved in the retreat movement; and lastly histories of individual houses and religious communities. I will introduce these now.

Handbooks. Our first group of materials were written for those who needed to be convinced of the value of spending time in quiet; for those looking for practical information about what to expect if they attended one; and for those, in the early days limited to priests, who wanted to learn how to lead a retreat. From these sources, we discover some of the theological and pastoral arguments which were put forward for spending time in spiritual retirement, we learn about the programmes followed, and what was expected of both conductor and retreatant. Among the most significant contributions are papers written by Fr Benson and Canon Carter in the 1860's which laid the foundations for future developments, two collections of articles edited by Robert Schofield in 1915 and 1927 which together give a fascinating glimpse of how the practice was developing at that time, and Canon Wareham's volume of 1950, which was at one stage regarded as the standard book on the subject. Also in this group is Brother Ramon's handbook issued in 1987, written from a Charismatic-Evangelical background, which in its use of Biblical precedents for the practice is the most substantial work of them all (Benson, 1867; Carter, 1893; Robinson, 1915; Schofield, 1927; Wareham, 1950; Ramon, 1987). Unfortunately, few of these books were very profound or attempted any real theological assessment of the practice, nor, apart from Carter, did they acknowledge the misgivings which some people had about the discipline.

Retreat Addresses. The second group of materials consists of collections of addresses given during a retreat and subsequently published to be used in private devotion or when no conductor was present. Some of these volumes are based on notes made by retreatants at the time of their delivery, and reflect the informality and intimacy of the occasions, although perhaps we cannot always be sure how accurately they record what was said (King, 1911, 1912; Talbot, 1953). Others contain the conductor's own notes, giving us more confidence in their accuracy (Carter, 1893; Randall, 1893). Bishop Walsham How's addresses are presented

in a way which is clearly intended for personal devotional use, and it is not certain how far they represent what was first presented and how far they were adapted for this purpose by his son who edited them (How, 1898). In contrast, Evelyn Underhill's talks were possibly prepared with an eye to their eventual publication, and reflect her usual attractive, if somewhat dated, style (Underhill, 1929, 1940, 1942, 1960). The value of these books is limited because the addresses were not necessarily the most important part of the total retreat experience and might therefore offer little idea of the value of the exercise as a whole. The quality of the silence and of the fellowship of the retreatants, the sense of welcome and the ambience of the house, are all key factors and, furthermore, we rightly have no idea what went on in any private interviews. Nevertheless, these volumes are vital to our investigation in showing something of how the tradition developed and how far, if at all, the Ignatian sequence of meditations was adhered to.

Devotional Exercises. A third group consists of books offering prayers and exercises for use in times of retirement, especially during a private retreat undertaken without the help of a director. These range from Henrietta Lear's guide first published anonymously in 1876, to later volumes which were written at the request of the Association for Promoting Retreats (APR) by the great twentieth century spiritual director Somerset Ward (Lear, 1876; Ward, 1956, 1957, 1959). These publications give a flavour of the prevailing spiritual fashions of the time, and of the advice being given to prospective retreatants on how best to use the experience.

Semi-official Sources. Fourthly I have used as a source of information material produced by various Church bodies. These include verbatim accounts of the meetings of the Church Congresses which were an important feature of Victorian church life from 1860 onwards, recording some important speeches made advocating or criticizing this new form of devotion. The annual issues of the Official Year Book of the Church of England included lists of retreats held during the previous year from 1892 onwards, although the editor warned his readers that these were not necessarily complete. These lists ceased in 1915, to be replaced in 1923 by information supplied by APR about the houses, whether

owned by dioceses, religious communities or private individuals, which welcomed individuals wishing to make a private retreat. Nowadays, only Diocesan Retreat and Conference centres are included in the Handbook, although often the provision made by communities is detailed in their individual entries. In all, some picture of how the provision of locations for retreats has changed over the years can be deduced from these publications. Also included in this group of sources are the 1913 report to the Bishop of Rochester and the Report on Evangelism issued in 1918 after the National Mission.

Vision. Fifthly, a major source which I have drawn upon heavily is APR's magazine *Vision*, now renamed *Retreats*, which runs continuously from 1920 onwards. Retreat centres are listed in later issues, together with their programmes, revealing clearly the changes in the kinds of retreat which were on offer. This periodical is also valuable because the articles which it contains are written both by retreat givers and retreat goers, reflecting changing ideas, hopes and methods. The current thinking is also expressed and argued about in papers which were read at the conferences for retreat givers which APR convened in 1948, 1959, 1969 and 1979. The 1969 report was in many ways prophetic, as it heralded the beginning of the ecumenical stage in the growth of the retreat movement in this country.

Biographies. Sixthly, there are biographies and memoirs of those who in the course of their ministry led retreats or encouraged their development. These volumes often give useful pointers to where and when retreats were held as well as to the hopes and intentions of those involved. Although strictly speaking classed as secondary material, these biographies give us windows into the assumptions and attitudes of the age in which they were written. Further, those written in the Victorian era often reproduce long quotations from original documents, and so for the purposes of this study can be treated as primary sources. The inclusion of these volumes in this list of sources is a reminder that in this area of study personalities are at least as important as theological ideas in shaping developments.

Histories. Seventhly, I have used histories of individual communities and of particular retreat houses. Amongst the former there is Alan Wilkinson's

substantial work on the Community of the Resurrection, Una Hannam's affectionate account of her own Community of the Holy Name, and Valerie Bonham's studies of the growth and work of the Wantage sisters (Hannam, 1972; Bonham, 1989, 1992; Wilkinson, 1992).

These printed sources have been approached with a consciousness of the questions which Arthur Marwick and others have suggested one must ask of any kind of document when engaged in historical study. (Marwick, 2001, pp. 180-182). In almost all cases, the authenticity and the provenance of these documents has not been in doubt, although there have been occasions when the exact date of publication has not been obvious and some detective work has been required to ascertain it. Victorian biographies tend to be hagiographical in character, written to ensure the good names and reputations of their subjects rather than to make a balanced assessment of their achievements and significance. An example of this is Liddon's account of the life of Pusey, which edits out his dark and obsessive side (Liddon, 1893). Some of the commendations of the practice are polemical in tone, such as Simpson's volume of 1927 (Simpson, 1927a), and need to be approached with a touch of scepticism.

A major disadvantage of relying mainly on printed sources is that it prioritises an elite who have had the opportunity and ability to write and to publish. We therefore tend to hear only the official line, and ignore the voices of the ordinary retreatants, of those who worked behind the scenes welcoming the retreatants into their houses, of parish priests who unassumingly gave of their best when called upon to lead these periods of withdrawal, or of those who found the whole experience bewildering. We will also be deprived of much of the colour which is given by the personal testimony of those involved. Such information can be discovered by using the methods which have been developed for recording oral history, and to these we now turn (Humphries, 1984, p. x; Lummis, 1987, p. 18; Yow, 1994, pp. 10, 14; Tosh, 2002, p. 302).

Oral History. I have collected oral history for the latter part of the study by taking a voice-recorder to conferences and other gatherings, and engaging people in unstructured but guided conversation. Other conversations have taken place in the interviewee's home. For convenience, some of my interviewing has been

carried out by email, which lacks the spontaneity of face-to-face contact, but yields more carefully considered replies. People have been encouraged to recall how, when and where they have been involved as retreatants, retreat leaders, as one of those running a retreat centre or those promoting the practice nationally and locally. I have sought information about what drew them to go on retreat and what types of retreat they have attended, about what they have found helpful and what unhelpful, what has made for a good retreat for them, what has hindered the process, and how their experience has changed over the years. The information collected has been analysed in terms of the themes which have emerged, and collated with the written evidence.¹⁰

Some researchers distrust oral history because the recorded comments are highly personal and subjective, because the interviewers will inevitably have introduced their own bias into the conversation, and because our memories are selective, often only recalling the pleasant things (Yow, 1994, pp. 10-23). However, used cautiously, such data can balance and enrich the written word, and open areas of discovery not previously recognised by the researcher.

Websites. Because there are few printed histories of houses, I have visited retreat house websites. Here again, because the retreat house staff have usually produced these and they contain information about the forthcoming programmes, they usually include non-contentious information and can be treated as authoritative. Most of these sites are very professionally done, giving a clear account of the house's facilities, history and aims, establishing an encouraging impression of the vigour of the retreat movement. I have also used the internet to obtain the latest information about training courses and communities, and I have had little reason to doubt their accuracy.

Personal Recollection. Finally, I have for the latter period of the research used at times my own personal recollections of the events because I have had the privilege of sharing much of what is being written about. However I have not given this undue prominence and indicate when this is the case. Whilst these have provided much of the inspiration for this work there have been salutary moments when my recollections have been corrected by the written material.

¹⁰ The interviewees are listed in the Bibliography

Material about the origins and development of retreats has, I submit, been collected and interpreted in a methodical and critical manner from a varied collection of sources. How has the story which has emerged been told?

***E. The Logic of the Thesis*¹¹**

I. Limits.

At first sight, the period of 150 years covered in this study may seem to be too wide for the purposes of a doctoral thesis. Would it perhaps have been better just to cover the Victorian period, to have included the lively church press of the time in the sources used, and to have really mastered the wealth of background material which is available? Or might it have been more productive to concentrate on just one house? For example, the history of the House of Retreat at Pleshey would be a very suitable subject for a ‘total history’ as advocated by the *Annales* school, looking at all of the factors which have enabled it to survive since the earliest days of Diocesan Houses to the present day (Tosh, 2002, p. 133). However, by taking a wide sweep it has been possible to recognise recurring patterns in the growth of retreats such as links with evangelism, the influence of the changing fortunes of the Anglo-Catholic movement, and above all the continuing and crucial influence of Roman Catholicism, which would not have emerged on a smaller canvas. I suggest that the limits of the thesis are in practice tight enough, for it deals with just one expression of Christian devotion out of the many forms which exist and considers how this has developed in one relatively small part of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Hopefully others will look in more detail at the areas which have been covered and both fill out and correct what is offered here.

2. Structure.

The material is arranged chronologically and showing recurring themes which develop along the way. Persistently the question is asked ‘when, how and

¹¹ A useful summary of this thesis is given in my article in *Theology* ‘Ignatian and Silent’ (Tyers, 2010a).

why have some members of the Church of England adopted the practice of retreat?’ seeing the answer not as a single event but as an ongoing process. Throughout there are subsidiary recurring questions which are asked of each period – what are the forms of retreat which are being offered, who is leading them, who is coming to them, where are they being held – always asking ‘why’ this is happening at this particular time.

The period covered by each of the three major chapters is determined by the hypothesis which I am testing, namely that developments in the Church of England are being shaped by prior changes in the practice within the Church of Rome. Each chapter begins with a brief historical survey of relevant forces in society and in the church. The first is from 1858 to 1912, covering the later part of the Victorian era and the whole of the Edwardian period. This period is initiated by the example, under the influence of the Romantic movement, of the rapid growth of clerical and lay retreats in Continental Catholicism, especially France and Belgium, which resonated with the needs and aspirations of some Anglo-Catholic clergy. We will see how, despite strong opposition from extreme Protestants, the practice was gradually made more widely available to clergy, religious and laity, including some Evangelicals, how pre-ordination retreats were introduced, and how eventually the provision of suitable retreat houses was begun. I therefore call this period ‘The Adoption of the Practice of Retreat.’

The second period of the development of retreats begins just after the establishment of the British Labour Party, an event which seems to have focused attention on a long running issue, namely the relationship between the established church and the working classes. In 1912, an English Jesuit, Charles Plater, published a book which reported on the success on the Continent of retreats for working men which aroused much interest in this country and enthusiasm for the retreat method. Despite the two world wars, there was from then on a steady increase in the numbers of retreatants, though mainly from one particular wing of the church, probably reaching a peak in the 1960’s in the provision of retreat houses and in the provision of training for retreat conductors. The retreat method became a recognised part of Anglican spirituality, and so I refer to this period as ‘Establishing the Retreat Tradition.’

My third period begins with the social and spiritual ferment of the 1960's, and with the Roman Catholic response in arranging Vatican II which began in 1962. This facilitated a drastic overhaul of the way in which retreats were offered in the Catholic Church, leading to the partial eclipse of the preached retreat, a return to Ignatius's original intentions and the introduction of new patterns of spiritual retirement. In the remarkable ecumenical freedom of the time, Anglicans were warmly invited to share in and to contribute to these developments, leading to a bewildering variety of ways in which these times of quiet are now offered. I therefore call this period 'The Diversification of the Practice of Retreat.'

A final chapter brings together the answers to the research question, examines whether or not the guiding hypothesis has been proven, and assess how far this borrowed Catholic Reformation devotion had been naturalized as a Church of England practice.

The narration of this account of the origins and development of the Anglican practice of retreat is unique, providing an original contribution to scholarship. It begins with the Victorian Church.

Chapter 2. The Adoption of the Practice of Retreat

Because of their interest in all things Catholic, it is not surprising that the adoption of the practice of retreat in the Church of England should come about as the result of the actions of the grandsons of the first member of the Oxford Movement. The Movement had began in the early 1830's as a group of Tory High Church intellectuals in that ancient university who were incensed by the interference of the secular government in the affairs of what they considered to be a Divine institution. By the late 1850's it had become 'a small army of largely unknown parochial clergy who laboured to realize the vision of Anglicanism that Newman and his friends first conceived' with Dr Pusey as their unofficial leader (Herring, 2002, p. 3). The founding fathers had been 'concerned with holiness of life within the fellowship of the church,' convinced that such sanctity could only be achieved if orthodoxy of belief and the integrity of doctrine could be maintained. They therefore called upon the established church to 'claim its rightful place as part of the church Catholic,' and retreats were part of this package (Chandler, 2003, p. ix). It can be seen as an expression of the Romantic Movement which was sweeping across Europe at that time, and this aspect has special relevance to our present study.

A. The influence of the Romantic Movement

1. The Continent

During the nineteenth century, there was throughout Catholic Europe a movement away from eighteenth-century rationalism to a less rigorous and more subjective approach to faith, accompanied by a romantic desire to recapture the practices of the medieval 'Golden Age' (Kohler, 1981, p. 258; Aubert, 1981c, p. 219). So devotion came to be expressed in more colourful and emotional ways. Processions, novenas, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to his Mother, visits to the Blessed Sacrament and veneration of the saints were all becoming part of the staple diet of European Catholics. Amongst these, the practice of retreats, in which the role of the affections and the will was emphasised in the context of a quiet waiting for the personal Word of God, was rapidly growing in

popularity with great benefits to the clergy, the religious and the laity alike. They were being offered to a growing number of retreatants in Catholic Europe throughout the nineteenth century in the form of the preached retreat. So great was the demand that there were not enough dedicated facilities to meet the growing demand, and so in France bishops opened their seminaries to lay people and the nobility lent their châteaux. Writing in 1911, Paul Debuchy said that by the end of the century retreats were being held, not only for religious and clergy, but also for specific groups such as employees, working men, teachers, conscripts, the deaf and the alumni of schools and colleges (Debuchy, 1911).

At the same time, with the advent of the railways and steam ships, travel was becoming easier, and many Tractarian clergy, looking for inspiration in their mission to affirm the Catholicity of the English church, became sympathetically familiar with what was happening amongst their European contemporaries. For example, Richard Meux Benson (1824-1915), when he was nineteen, paid a prolonged visit to Rome, and whilst there made contact with the Jesuits (Allchin, 1958, p. 192). Hoping to restore the religious life in England, Dr Pusey, William Butler (1818-1894), Rector of Wantage, and John Mason Neale (1818-1866) of East Grinstead visited Catholic religious houses, especially in France, seeking guidance in establishing their own communities.¹² It was only a matter of time before retreats would be made available in this country.

2. England

Holiness. The Romantic Movement was as strong here, stimulating a growth in forms of devotion also amongst English Catholics, Free Church and Anglicans alike (Parsons, 1988d; Heimann, 1995). One of its results was a growth in the desire to live a more holy life. Newman urged that the faith expressed by the Oxford Movement best suited this romantic approach because:

¹²Horton Davies has suggested that part of the motivation for founding these communities was not only the charitable work which they would do, but rather:

the chief significance of the Anglican religious communities was as houses of spiritual devotion. Here provision was to be made for frequent Communion and for regular confession. Here it would be possible to recover the full meaning of liturgical prayer, by means of the Breviary offices, of which Matins and Evensong were but a surviving remnant in the Book of Common Prayer. Here it would be possible to practice the more developed kinds of mental prayer. Here, by the provision of retreats, and the example of a gracious godliness, the understanding of the spiritual life in the English Church at large might be increased (Davies, 1996, p. 132).

what is Christian high-mindedness, generous self-denial, contempt of wealth, endurance of suffering, and earnest striving after perfection, but an improvement and transformation, under the Holy Spirit, of that natural character of mind which we call romantic? (Bebbington, 2000, p. 13).

This both resonated with the teaching about holiness at the heart of the Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century, and also contrasted with it (Nockles, 2008, p. 219). Whereas the earlier revival spoke about the importance of the moment of conversion as the means of growth in holiness, the catholic revival, following the romantics, thought more in terms of personal growth throughout one's life, like an acorn growing into a tree (Bebbington, 2000, pp. 22, 23).

This search for holiness became a feature of Tractarian piety, and during the 1840s Dr Pusey undertook a study of the development of Catholic devotion after the Protestant reformation. He edited a number of translations of the French Catholic Reformation spiritual masters to help satisfy his own spiritual hunger and to provide material which he could use in the direction of others. These included in 1844 Avrillion's *Guide to passing Lent Holily*, in his preface to which he deplored the 'busy, active, hurried life', and reminded his readers of the deep traditions of retreat in the wider church (Smith, 1991, p. 97-108). He was by then recommending his penitents to read the *Spiritual Exercises*, and preached a series of sermons on them, preparing the ground for their use and for the eventual introduction of retreats (Pusey, 1898, p. 53).

Solitude. A further contribution made by Romanticism was 'a new introspection, preoccupation with the self, and one's own experience, will, emotions and imaginations rather than just rationality.' So solitude became important to the Lakeland poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and others as a prerequisite for creativity and for becoming one's true self (Mursell, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 177; Maitland, 2008, p. 235). Indeed, so great was their insistence that George Eliot reminded them that silence was no guarantor of inspiration – sometimes the brooding hen was sitting on an addled egg.

It was perhaps this prevailing desire for solitude which, in the December of 1845, led a recently ordained Cambridge graduate, William Butler, to write in a letter to Keble that hardly a day passed without him thinking about the 'retreat'.

He was afraid that his work might become ‘secularised’ through the hardening caused by ‘the constant dealing with holy things without any intermissions of prayer and watchfulness and fasting and self examination.’ He was also concerned for other young clergy, who had been ordained with little preparation or realisation of what they were taking on, and who were now being held back in their ministry by a deep awareness of their personal sin. What was needed therefore, he suggested, was somewhere for these men to go away in parties for a week or so to renew and strengthen their vision (Butler, 1894, p. 33).¹³

In these ways, although the Romantic Movement did not lead directly to the Anglicans borrowing the practice of retreat from their Roman brethren, it certainly prepared the way for it. The crucial development was to come about because of the initiative of a group of parochial clergy.

B. The Society of the Holy Cross and the first Retreat

1. The First Attempts

Retreats were introduced into the Church of England by a society led by a prominent Ritualist priest, the Revd. Charles Lowder (1820-1880). Lowder, who gave heroic ministry in the London Docklands, had a particular concern for the poor of the large slums of England’s industrial cities who, he felt, were not being adequately cared for by the church. During a period of enforced rest in France, staying at the seminary at Yvetot, he read Louis Abelly’s biography of St Vincent De Paul (Jones and Mackley, 2006, p. 19). Finding great inspiration in the example of this great French apostle to the poor, Lowder and a group of friends began a company of mission priests which they named ‘The Society of the Holy Cross’, otherwise known as ‘*Societas Sanctae Crucis*’ (SSC) (Ellsworth, 1982, p. 21). It was designed to ‘promote fellowship between Ritualist clergy, to strengthen their spiritual discipline through a rule of life, and to provide them with guidance on such practical matters as hearing confessions’

¹³The focus on solitude at this time is illustrated by an email which I received from my son, a prison chaplain; ‘The literature on prisons from this period [i.e, c1840] of massive prison expansion showed that they were designed to maximise the solitude of the offenders to help them repent and rectify their behaviour. Photographs of prison chapels show that each man sat in his own booth, screened from his neighbours, in tiered seating facing the preacher. Cells were solitary. While exercising they wore hoods with beaks to prevent conversation’ (Tyers, 2009).

(Yates, 1999, p. 71). It was important that members should be able to discuss their problems with the assurance that these would be kept private, and so a practice of confidentiality about the business of chapter meetings was adopted. As a result, the Society developed the reputation of being 'secretive,' leading as we will see to some misunderstanding of its motives (Higgs, 2006, p.173).

One of the rules of St Vincent's Congregation of the Mission was that its members should make an annual retreat, and perhaps it was this requirement which encouraged Lowder and his friends to experiment with corporate periods of retirement. The first one was organised and hosted by The Revd F. H. Murray at his Rectory at Chislehurst in Kent, from February 18th-24th 1856 (Ellsworth, 1982, p. 22). Dr Pusey, who had advised the members during the process of drawing up the rule of the new society and was himself a member for a time, facilitated a second retreat held later that year, July 5th-10th, at his house in Oxford. As described by Lowder in a letter to his mother, the pattern of each day included a daily Eucharist and the recitation of all of the monastic offices. There were devotional readings at meals, and two conferences a day at which the participants discussed pastoral matters, much of the time being in practice taken up with the vexed question of hearing confessions (Trench, 1881, p. 95; Mackley, 2006, p. 56). I offer a reconstruction of the programme in the Appendix. A third retreat took place in the following July, the brethren meeting this time at Canon T. Chamberlain's vicarage, also in Oxford (Ellsworth, 1982, p. 177; Macnab, 2006, p. 69).

2. The First Retreat

However, these first attempts at making a communal retreat proved to be unsatisfactory. In the view of Canon T. T. Carter (1808-1901), who had also become a member of the Society, this was because they were like a meeting for mutual conference and did not offer the course of connected teaching and meditation which one should find in a retreat. There was not enough silence (Carter, 1893, p. xxx). So Pusey turned to the Rev. Richard Meux Benson (1824-1915), who by now also belonged to the Society. He spent the early months of 1858 making a detailed study of the practice as it had developed in the Catholic

Church in the light of his earlier experience in Rome and had come to two conclusions. Firstly, retreats must be completely silent; ‘do not have conferences during retreat – you meet to converse with your own heart and with God only’ (Woodgate, 1953, p. 44). Secondly, they should follow the Ignatian pattern, adapted to English needs, a conclusion which was perhaps not surprising, both because of Pusey’s own advocacy of the Exercises and of Benson’s own earlier contact with the Jesuits (Allchin, 1958, p. 192).

So in July 1858, a group of about a dozen Anglican clergymen, eight of them from SSC,¹⁴ with the blessing of the Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce (1805-1873), gathered during the summer vacation at his newly founded theological college at Cuddesdon, just outside Oxford (Macnab, 2006, p. 70). There is no detailed record of what they did, but it may be that a timetable, taken from a book published by Benson in 1868, and reproduced in the Appendix, reflects the pattern of this event (Benson, 1867, p. 50). In keeping with the established Continental practice, Benson led a preached retreat, following in his addresses the pattern of the meditations in the Ignatian ‘Spiritual Exercises’. This is revealed by Barry Smith’s analysis of the addresses, also to be found in the Appendix (Woodgate, 1953, p. 45; Smith, 1991, p. 110). Benson indeed insisted upon the observance of the essential element of silence, and it was from this that the event drew its power. Its Anglican characteristics were in evidence, eschewing the more exotic Roman devotional practices and basing the worship upon the Book of Common Prayer. One further important adaptation from Continental practice was that the leader was not a religious, as was almost always the case there, but an ordinary parish priest, albeit one who had now discovered his vocation as a retreat conductor and who would in due time make his own life vows. At the end of the four days, Benson described the results of the experiment in a letter to his mother, writing:

God has, indeed, been very generous to us in providing us such a quiet place for retreat, and helping us, inexperienced as we are, yet to realize, each in our measure, the great mystery which surrounds us...We had a nice little company of eleven, and sometimes twelve. One or two of them were men of such advanced holiness that it made one quite ashamed to sit as

¹⁴ Their names are listed in Benson’s own hand in a notebook kept in the archives of SSJE at St Edward’s House, Westminster.

teacher, but I trust that the Holy Spirit taught us something each and all. One thing I very much hope – that, as we have begun the practice at Cuddesdon, others may use the college for the same purpose (Woodgate, 1953, p. 45).

So it was that a small group of Anglican clergymen adopted the practice of retreat as it had developed on the Continent. This form of devotion was congruent with their aspirations to grow in personal holiness and it fulfilled their desire for a more Catholic pattern of devotion. This, the first fully silent preached retreat to be held in the Church of England,¹⁵ was to provide a template for many other such occasions.

During the ten years immediately following the experiment, the benefits of these periods of retirement were gradually shared with others, firstly with an ever widening body of clergy, then with religious orders, and finally with laity. Indeed, the enthusiasm was such that by the end of the decade two religious orders had been established who had a special concern for the retreat ministry, and two retreat houses had been opened. All of these developments we will now describe.

C. The First Decade

1. Clergy

Bishop Wilberforce on April 17th 1860 discussed with his Rural Deans the possibility of arranging retreats for small groups of the clergy of his diocese, and it was agreed to hold one, again at Cuddesdon College, during the following summer vacation. It seems to have been planned in conjunction with SSC, eight of whose members were present for it (Macnab, 2006, p. 70). Wilberforce's diary entry for July 19th 1860, a month after his notorious encounter with Thomas Huxley, reads as follows:

¹⁵ Was this really the first retreat for clergy? In 1877 Dr Pusey published a volume entitled *Ten Sermons during a Retreat for Clergy and a Mission for Lay People, at St Saviour's Church, Leeds, in the Octave of its Consecration 1845*, which would appear to be ten years earlier than those mentioned above. However, this was the third edition, the first one having been published in 1845 when there was no mention of 'a retreat.' It was called *A course of sermons on solemn subjects chiefly bearing on repentance and amendment of life, preached in St. Saviour's church, Leeds, during the week after its consecration on the feast of S. Simon and S. Jude, 1845*. Certainly, it was not a retreat as we would understand the word.

I spent [today] in retreat with Carter, Ewing, Warden of All Souls, Liddon, etc, etc. Carter's addresses quite excellent, and I hope the time of private prayer [was] also useful. May our God grant it for Christ's sake (Wilberforce, 1881, p. 445).

A copy of the programme for this retreat, to be found in the Appendix, shows that there was a long period of conversation before the retreat began, allowing the retreatants to catch up with each other's news. It also reveals a re-introduction of the monastic hours, but in Bp Cosin's version of them, although the company continued to join in Morning and Evening Prayer at the Parish Church as in Benson's retreat two years previously. Silence was not apparently rigidly enforced, although trivial conversation was frowned upon, and books were recommended for personal reading – something of which Ignatius of Loyola would not have approved.

Retreats for clergy during the summer vacation became a regular annual event at Cuddesdon College. Until his translation to Winchester in 1869, Wilberforce was himself always present, unless called away by pressing work. Indeed, in July 1862, in the unexpected absence of Henry Liddon (1829-1890) who was due to be the conductor that year, he led it himself at short notice, an occasion recalled by Dean Randall (1824-1906) with deep appreciation some thirty years later (Wilberforce, 1881, p. 55; Randall, 1893, p. x). Liddon was able to lead the retreat a year or so later, and Randall remembered his meditations as being 'concise, clear, vivid, full of a force and power which made them take hold of the hearer, or rather enter into him and possess him', although Liddon himself felt that the retreat had been a great failure, and never led another one. In appreciation of these early retreats, Carter dedicated his own book of retreat outlines to Wilberforce's memory, 'in grateful recollection of his earnest encouragement on the revival of what has become an integral portion of the church's devotional life' (Carter, 1893, p. vi).

The members of SSC continued to gather annually for their own periods of retirement, (Carter, 1893, p. 1; Macnab, 2006, p. 70). During the 1860's they made the exercise available elsewhere, arranging retreats at St Aidan's Birkenhead and St Augustine's Canterbury (at that stage a Missionary College). SSC also set up a Retreat Committee to promote this form of devotion, which

continued in existence until the next century. In June 1865 Fr Murray inserted a notice in the *Church Times* advertising five retreats for clergy. The first of these was at Hurstpierpoint in July, to be conducted by Canon Carter, with another, again in July, at Cuddesdon, arranged primarily for clergy of the Oxford Diocese. A third was to take place at the end of July at St Mary's College Harlow, to be led by the Rev. R. Milman, Vicar of Great Marlow, a fourth to take place sometime in August in the north of the country at Horbury, led by Fr Benson, and finally one at Ditchingham in either August or September (Harston, 1865, p. 15).

Others were promoting retreats. The Anglo-Catholic Bishop of Salisbury Walter Hamilton (1808-1869) in 1865 used his charge to his clergy to urge them to withdraw for a time from their ordination duties 'to prayer, self examination, meditation and other religious exercises.' Before his death he twice went into retreat with his clergy at Little Lanford, both of them led by Richard Randall, a leading Tractarian priest and later the first Rector of All Saints Clifton before becoming the Dean of Chichester (Harston, 1865, p. 10; Randall, 1893, p. xxvi; Briscoe and Mackay, 1932, p. 159). Although retreats were still only available to a few clergy, by the end of the decade the practice seems to be well established with the foundations for future expansion firmly laid.

2. Religious

Retreats for Religious Communities followed quickly. A regular annual retreat for Canon Carter's Community of St John the Baptist was established at Clewer in 1861 to give the sisters an opportunity to renew their vision and to restore their strength, the first one being taken by Fr Benson. In 1864 the conductor was John Mason Neale (1818-1866), his subject being "The Three Marys at the Tomb". He wrote afterwards:

I liked the work, and I liked the place. And I liked, of course, where all hearts are open, to see how much or how little their sisters were like my own. It is the custom there (and it is a good one) that the priest who gives the Retreat takes the Offices. So with the Eight Hours, the three Meditations and the confessions, there was enough to do...I was quite sorry when it was over (Towle, 1906, p. 340).

He hoped to be invited to lead this retreat again, but because of his premature death, he never led another one. Later retreats for the Clewer Sisters were led by Fr Mackonochie of SSC, and Fathers O'Neil, Grafton, Congreve and Pullen of the Society of St John the Evangelist (Allchin, 1958, p. 82).

The first retreat for Neale's own sisterhood of St Margaret, East Grinstead was held in 1863, the conductor being the Rev. J. D. Chambers, with whom Neale had collaborated in the early 1850's in the production of *Hymns Noted*. Before the retreat, Neale had written to a friend telling him that they had not had enough sisters before to run one, and how much the sisters needed it, because they had worked continuously from Epiphany to Lent (Lawson, 1910, p. 342). Two years later, the retreat was led by Randall (Lawson, 1910, p. 363; Chadwick, 1970, Vol 2, p. 167).

The year 1866 saw the formation of two religious communities whose ministries were to be very closely allied to the provision of retreats. One was the Society of Saint John the Evangelist, which was born on the feast day of their patron saint, Dec 27th 1866, when Fr Benson, Charles Grafton and Fr O'Neill took life vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, forming a company of Mission priests. Following the example of many of the Catholic orders for men, their main purposes were to lead parish missions and to give retreats. They adopted a rule which showed the influence of St Vincent de Paul but also had a Benedictine flavour, and included living in silence so that they could listen to God. They themselves were to be in retreat twice a year, for a month in summer (later reduced to two weeks) and for a fortnight at Christmas, often taken by Fr Benson himself (Smith, 1980, pp. 28, 76).

The 'Cowley Dads', as they were to be affectionately known, were to be much in demand as retreat givers and as spiritual directors to various communities of women, who found it of great value to be guided by priests who were themselves living under rule (Perchenet, 1969, p. 63). In 1868, they opened a Mission House in Marston Street, Cowley, which was to be their Mother House and also to be used as a place to which laity and clergy could come for retreats (Cowley St. John Parish Magazine, October, 1868). The first event to be held there was week-long retreat for priests taken by Fr Carter, followed in the next

week by a residential retreat for laymen. Fr Benson wrote in his parish magazine, which had by this time become in effect the house journal of the Society, that such retreats had now been held in many places for clergy and laity, both men and women.

The second community closely associated with retreats was The Society of the Sisters of Bethany. Their foundress was Etheldreda Ann Bennett (1824-1913), a former London society beauty and for many years a directee of Dr Pusey (Anson, 1955, p. 405). Encouraged by him, the sisters established themselves in a little house at Lloyd Square in the slums of Clerkenwell, where the squalor, disease, unemployment and destitution were as bad as anywhere in London, and acquired the house next door, followed gradually by others in the Square, to be used as a house of quiet, making retreats their main work. Links with SSC were strong, for when they welcomed their first retreatants in 1868 the conductor was a member of the Society. He was the Revd. J. E. Vaux, who was curate at St Mary Magdalene Munster Square and the assistant editor of the *Church Times*. Other conductors in these early days included Fr Mackonochie, Canon Carter and Fr Benson, all SSC members (Anson, 1955, p. 409).

We do not have details for the retreats for other communities but they no doubt happened. What about the laity?

3. Laity

Because of a lack of suitable facilities, the provision of retreats for laity was not as easy as it had been for clergy and religious, but experiments were soon being made. As early as 1853, Fr James Skinner (1818-1881), the Ritualist curate of St Barnabas Pimlico, was encouraging a lady to include an annual retreat in her rule of life, along with a quiet day each month and confession four times a year, true to the teaching of de Sales (Trench, 1884, p. 126). By 1865, he was offering detailed advice to another directee on making a seven day private retreat, with a preliminary three day preparation period (Trench, 1884, pp. 224-232).

Early group retreats for laity took the form of parish retreats which, as on the Continent, developed alongside parish missions in what has been termed 'Anglo-Catholic Revivalism'. One of those who were involved in these

evangelistic events and was also perhaps the first to experiment with the provision of parish retreats for laity was Father George William Herbert (1830-1894), the Ritualist vicar of St Peter's Vauxhall from 1860 until his death. This was an area of great poverty, the population living in high-density Victorian housing pervaded by the smell of the gasworks and, until the completion of London's sewerage system in 1870, the stench of untreated effluent flowing down the Thames (Hannam, 1972, p. 15). Fr Herbert has been called "an Evangelical-Catholic", and held a succession of missions in his own parish. Carter, Benson and Randall all preached at his church during this first decade (Hannam, 1972, p. 16). He was ready to use any means to deepen the spiritual life of his parish, and therefore arranged a parish retreat in 1867, to be based in the parish church, following the example of the Passionists and other Catholic orders. One hundred and fifteen people expressed an interest, although we have no indication of how many were in fact able to participate. There was a preliminary address on the first evening, and the retreat then continued for two full days. It differed from a mission, in being aimed at the faithful rather than designed to communicate with those beyond the Christian community. It was based upon liturgical services followed by meditations, and aimed for an atmosphere of quiet, instead of the exuberance of evangelistic outreach. No provision was made for meals, and there was no rule of silence, although conversation was to be kept to a minimum. Presumably, retreatants attended as their work allowed, and they were reliant upon the sympathy of their families at home to maintain any kind of devotional quiet. Lessons were learnt from this experiment, for when the next retreat was held four years later, an outside conductor was arranged, with the parish clergy available to hear confessions (Hannam, 1972, p. 27). The programme for this first event, which is to be found in the Appendix, reveals a timetable with a minimum of events, allowing plenty of time for people to enjoy the peace and prayerful atmosphere of the parish church.

The following year, Dr Pusey conducted a lay retreat at St. Saviours, Osnaburg Street, for the Companions of the Love of Jesus. They were members of a fellowship engaged in 'Perpetual Intercession for the Conversion of

Sinners,’ founded in 1855 by Priscilla Lydia Sellon (1822-1878). Dr Pusey had been closely involved with her in the establishment of the ‘Devonport Sisters of Mercy’ in 1848, an event which had marked the beginning of the restoration of the religious life to the Church of England. Also present were Fr Grafton SSJE, available to hear confessions, and the Hon. Charles Lindley Wood, later to become well known as Lord Halifax, a leading Anglo-Catholic layman in the Church of England, and himself a regular retreatant to the end of his life (Williams, 1965, p. 270). I have no account of the practical arrangements, and assume that they were similar to those of the previous year’s retreat at Vauxhall. There were eleven addresses, beautifully crafted both to meet the situation of those sharing in the devotion and to further the objects of their fellowship. In his introductory address, Dr Pusey said that they met in different circumstances from ordinary retreats. They were not here to discover their vocation, as was the original purpose of the *Spiritual Exercises*, nor to ‘break off the old’ way of life, but rather to renew it. Indeed, the virtue of perseverance consisted of many such new beginnings, beginning life afresh each day. ‘The object of this retreat will be, by God’s grace, to create in us fresh devotion for the souls for whom Christ died, fresh zeal for his glory, fresh anxiety for their salvation’. The conductor went on to meditate upon the love for men and women of the Father, of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, upon the horribleness of sin and of its consequences, and on the necessity of intercession. In his final address, he dealt with an issue which was beginning to impact upon the Companions, namely the offering of prayers for those members who had died (Pusey, 1885).

By the end of this first decade then, the originally Roman Catholic practice of retreat was moving well beyond the immediate circle of Anglican clergymen who had been its first adherents. Although Benson was sad that the numbers of priests attending were still low, this was partly because the results of a retreat were not immediately obvious, with no startling transformation but a deepening of their communion with God (Benson, 1867, pp. 1-3). Writing in 1868, Canon Carter was more optimistic, saying that retreats for clergy were being held at 18 - 20 places a year, and that the average attendance was twenty, with the greatest

number being forty (Carter, 1868, p. 433). The big problem was the shortage of suitable conductors, who were best trained by attending a retreat themselves as committed retreatants, rather than just primarily 'to gather hints' (Benson, 1867, pp. 33, 32, 35). Walsham How recorded that by this date he had attended a number of such times of retirement, with great benefit, and had conducted one himself at the Palace of Lichfield (How, 1898, p. 95). Two religious communities now existed who were committed to develop the ministry and who, by opening their retreat houses, were beginning to provide the infra-structure needed to sustain it. The input of the SSC was to continue for many years to come, both in organising periods of devotional retirement and in providing the necessary conductors. Indeed, Fr Embry in his history of the Society claimed, with some truth, that its members in the earlier days of the Movement possessed the monopoly of this work of retreat leadership (w/Embry, 1931).

We have three advocates of the practice of retreat from this period and it is to them that we turn now.

D. Early Advocates of the Practice of Retreat¹⁶

1. Catholic Roots

The arrival in England from Catholic Europe of the practice of retreat was greeted with great misgiving. In the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a fear in England of perceived Papal. Suspicion surrounding anything with a connection to the Jesuits was compounded by the fact that this devotion was being promoted by the Society of the Holy Cross, itself distrusted.¹⁷ An example of the level of suspicion of this method was provided in the summer of 1869 when William Walsham How hosted for his fellow clergy a retreat in his Shropshire vicarage, conducted by Edward King. None of them belonged to SSC, but nevertheless a letter appeared in the local newspaper, written by an anonymous neighbouring Evangelical clergyman, accusing the group of meeting for the purpose of secretly celebrating the Roman Mass (How, 1898, p. 96).

¹⁶ This section is a summary of my paper 'Not a Papal Conspiracy but a Spiritual Principle' published in the *Journal of Anglican Studies* (Tyers, 2010b).

¹⁷ Cuddesdon had itself been the subject of savage attack by Charles Golightly because of 'extreme ritualism and frippery ornament,' forcing Henry Liddon to resign as its chaplain in 1859 (Atherstone, 2004, pp. 28-48).

Clearly a defence was needed for this new devotion, and this was provided before the end of the first decade by three writers, all members of SSC. The first was William Lyall who had been the eighth person to join the society in 1855 and who published a twelve-page pamphlet in 1863 or 1864 which contained the first descriptions of the early retreats. Its title was *The Need and the Means of Associated and Devotional Retirement for the Clergy*. The second was Benson who in 1867 or 1868 issued a tract called *Of the Advantage and Aim of Spiritual Retreats* in a series known as 'The Evangelist's Library'. Thirdly, Canon Carter wrote a paper on the subject for a volume edited by the Revd Orby Shipley, soon to convert to the Church of Rome, entitled *The Church and the World in 1868*, reprinted in a slightly shortened form in 1893.

All three of them acknowledge the Roman roots of the practice. Carter reveals an intimate knowledge of the way in which retreats were being offered in the Roman church, probably gained during his visits to the Continent. He offers a detailed description of a four-week long retreat which had been undertaken recently by someone wanting to join the Jesuits, followed by an account of a preached retreat, detailing the role of the director. In his opinion, the full *Exercises* were too elaborate for ordinary use; however, they supplied a standard and a direction for present retreat givers, suggesting the subjects which might be offered for meditation and giving the conductor principles by which he could choose and adapt his materials (Carter, 1868, pp. 423-31). Neither Lyall nor Benson specifically mention Ignatius, but their accounts of the subjects covered in the addresses clearly betray a knowledge of his sequence of meditations (Benson, 1867, pp. 26, 27; Lyall, nd. c. 1863, p. 3). How then did these authors defend the use of the distrusted practice?

2. Yet Anglican

Anglican Discipline. Firstly, they claimed that although this form of devotion was common in the Roman church these Anglican gatherings were completely different in character. To prove this, Carter suggests that the failure of the first retreats showed that they were 'an effort of life, springing from amongst ourselves, not borrowed from without' (Carter, 1868, p. 432). Lyall claimed that

whilst the Roman experience shows how efficacious they are in promoting the devotional life, Anglican retreats, which did not contain any dogmatic teaching, aimed at leading people to 'greater perfectness [sic.] in their personal character and life, and in fulfilment of the duties of their vocation' (Lyall, nd. c. 1863, p. 5). There had been a relaxed discipline, with no extremes of self denial (Benson, 1867, p. 24; Lyall, nd. c. 1863, p. 6). This was a very Anglican devotion.

Fundamental Law. Secondly, they argued that retreats were expressions of a fundamental spiritual law, citing both scriptural examples and precedents in the earlier history of the church. Although auricular confession, often used in this context, was a party matter, the retreat itself was not (Benson, 1867, pp. 9-18; Carter, 1868, pp. 418-422). There was nothing in this devotion to which anyone could object.

Holy Spirit. Thirdly, a retreat can be the occasion for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. Benson wrote, 'we ought not go into retreat merely to meditate, nor to be taught, nor to form resolution, but to be ourselves transformed by a special communication of the grace of God.' Therefore those who come should expect great things and observe the silence carefully, which would not lead to a gloomy atmosphere, but rather a tone of rest and recreation 'for the presence and the sympathy of Jesus makes them to be so' (Benson, 1867, pp. 19-23).

Need for quiet. Fourthly, although Lyall praised the clergy of the time for greater zeal for souls, more frequent services, more frequent celebration of Holy Communion and a deeper devotional life, all of this increased the pressure upon them, resulting in a mechanical saying of the offices, and thinking that the great truths which they preached applied to others rather than to themselves. Although they were meeting more regularly in the clerical meetings which were growing at the time for the study of scripture and mutual support, there was no opportunity on these occasions for private meditation, and for the thoughtful application of the truths shared. There was a need to combine instructive addresses with private meditation, and this was best done through retreats (Lyall, nd. c. 1863, pp. 1-4).

Further Training. Finally, Carter suggested that retreats offered an opportunity for clergy, few of whom had attended the theological colleges which were coming into existence at this time, to learn some devotional skills. Together with

the rest and companionship of the retreat, its disciplines would provide an opportunity for this training to be given (Carter, 1868, pp. 440 - 444).

So the case was made, and it must have borne fruit, because over the coming years, despite the suspected links with the Papacy, more and more people made their retreat, including, as we will now see, some Evangelicals.

E. Evangelicals and Retreats.

Anything which originated in Rome was bound to cause controversy in Victorian times, and opposition to retreats from those of a Protestant persuasion continued. The secrecy of SSC did not help the situation, giving Walter Walsh the opportunity to point out that whilst they advertised the retreats organised by their retreat committee in *Church Times*, they never identified them as being SSC retreats (Walsh, 1898, p. 58). He warned his readers, 'Loyal Churchmen would do well to avoid Retreats if they wish to retain their allegiance to the principles of the Protestant Reformation'.

1. Bishop E. H. Bickersteth

Not all Evangelicals held this position. The Revd Edward Henry Bickersteth, later to be Bishop of Exeter, a life-long Evangelical and faithful pastor of the parish of Christ Church Hampstead from 1855-1885, 'was perhaps the first person of his tradition to conduct Retreats and Quiet Days' (Carpenter, 1933, p. 400). He was attacked in the protestant newspaper *The Record* after leading a Quiet Day for a hundred clergy in Leeds in 1877. He replied 'Protestant and Evangelical Retreats I heartily advocate; Romanizing Retreats I heartily deprecate'. He said that although he disliked all newspaper correspondence, this was an occasion 'to urge our true-hearted Evangelical leaders and fathers-in-God to put themselves at the head of the Retreat Movement which no one can stop, for it supplies a felt need' (Aglionby, 1907, p. 35). He was invited to lead retreats and quiet days in many parts of the country. For example, in March 1878 he addressed clergy at Windsor, Canon T. T. Carter being one of the auditors for the first address. In June, Mr Maclagan asked him to lead a quiet day in his parish, and towards the end of the year he was preparing twelve addresses for quiet days

at Clifton (Aglionby, 1907, p. 36ff). On being made Rural Dean in September 1878, he did not delay in arranging a retreat for his clergy, led by the Revd W. B. Carpenter, later Bishop of Ripon. Mr Carpenter, he tells us, was wonderfully helpful 'so clear, so searching, so tenderly eloquent'.

Bickersteth was involved in one particular experiment which we read about in a letter which appeared in the *Oswestry Advertiser and Montgomeryshire Mercury* in December 1874 (How, 1874). It was from William How, who referred to the correspondence of 1869 at the time of the clergy retreat held in his vicarage, and claimed that such practice was now 'becoming divested of party character'. As proof of this, he quoted in full a long letter which he had received from Bickersteth, which I will look at in some detail because it records an Evangelical adaptation of the practice.

Bickersteth began his letter, which reads as if it had been sent to a number of interested people, by claiming that retreats were not Romanising, 'for they have a power, and an increasing power, in the Church of Christ.' He went on to report that a plan for holding meetings of Evangelicals for spiritual retirement, instruction and conference had been agreed in June of that year. It had been decided that such meetings should last for three days, and should be limited to an attendance of twenty-four people, who were to agree to be present for the whole time. A leader should be chosen who would address clergy at least twice a day, appoint scripture to be discussed, suggest topics for united prayer, and, in consultation with the host, draw up a timetable. Services were to be held in church, the Lord's Supper being offered on at least the first and last mornings, and there were to be hours of recreation, exercise and fraternal intercourse. The brethren were to be lodged in houses of friends or hired lodgings, but would have their meals in common; and share the expenses. They had decided that the first such meeting would be held at Hampstead, Bickersteth's own parish, and that it would be led by Rev. Canon Thorold, at that time vicar of St Pancras and who, when he became Bishop of Rochester, was to be no friend of the Ritualists.

All of this was very similar to what was happening already in such devotions shared by Catholic clergy, but the Evangelical character was demonstrated by the fact that the meeting had unanimously deprecated and

condemned asceticism or the direction of one man's conscience by another. Therefore, there was to be no 'conductor' or 'director', but a 'conference leader', who nevertheless carried a great weight of responsibility for guiding the others in the exercise. Further, there were to be no restrictions of silence or rigid rules, although any conversations were to be for the 'spiritual improvement and refreshing of our souls.'

In the event, the response to this suggestion had been so great that thirty-six had met from the afternoon of Tuesday October 13th 1874 until the following Friday morning. Those attending included three 'Evangelical standard bearers,' and six curates, the participants being mainly from large parishes and representing eleven dioceses. The programme reveals that, even if there was no rigid rule of silence, the atmosphere would have been one of quiet. Bickersteth wrote that the event had a 'holy and blessed influence and that many had not known such a period of refreshment for years.' He went on, 'For myself, after twenty six years experience as a pastor, [it was] like a re-ordination to the work of ministry'.

2. Other Evangelicals

In his Episcopal Charge for 1876 the evangelical Bishop of Wakefield Robert Bickersteth (1816-1884), a cousin of Edward, announced that one of his aims was to raise the standard of personal holiness of his clergy. Encouraging them to secure time for prayer, meditation, and the study of God's Word, he especially commended 'seasons of retirement for prayer and meditation and mutual exhortation out of God's Word [which] would be found eminently useful.' He continued 'such seasons for special retirement have been found precious in the experience of the many who have enjoyed them; times for spiritual refreshment which have left a special blessing behind.' In August of that year, he personally led a retreat for his clergy held at the Training College, Ripon, on the theme of Sanctification and the need for Holiness (Bickersteth, 1887, pp. 239, 241). He arranged a further period of retirement in 1880 at the same venue, describing it as a 'private meeting of Clergy for prayer and meditation, with a view to the deepening of their spiritual life'. Meals were to be

in common in the College Hall, and the cost would be about fifteen shillings (Bickersteth, 1887, p. 243). It is not clear if there was any rule of silence on this occasion. His son commented that by organising this retreat, Bickersteth 'disarmed the opposition of those who supposed that there was something un-English and anti-Protestant in such a movement' (Bickersteth, 1887, p. 242).

We will see also how Bishop Thorold made Quiet Days for clergy, laity and clergy wives an important feature of his episcopate (Simpkinson, 1886, p. 207-211). The use of evangelical theological colleges such as Wycliffe and St Aidan's Birkenhead for clergy retreats would seem to indicate that, although still regarded by many as Anglo-Catholic, the practice was becoming part of the spiritual life of people drawn from a widening spectrum of ecclesiastical hues.

F. Ordination Retreats

Periods of retirement immediately prior to ordination were already an important part of Roman Catholic practice. The influence of St Vincent de Paul is to be seen here because it was he who had organised the first such retreats at the request of the Bishop of Beauvais in 1631. At a time when, throughout Catholic Europe, seminaries were few in number and the selection of candidates for ordination was haphazard, these times of retirement immediately preceding ordination offered a short ten day course in moral theology, prayer and the duties of a priest, within a deeply devotional atmosphere (Coste, 1935b, pp. 157-169).

1. Situation in England

The situation in nineteenth-century England was little better than it had been in seventeenth-century France. Seminaries, which we preferred to call Theological Colleges, were slowly being introduced, but nevertheless the immediate preparation for ordination was far from adequate. The deacons' and priests' examinations were held in the same week as the ordination, and the atmosphere was described by the then Bishop of Ely, James Woodford, as being more like a college reunion than a devotional gathering (Ashwell, 1880, p. 330). For example, George Wilkinson (1833-1907), who was a pioneer of the Parish Mission movement, and who was to become Bishop of Truro and later Primus of

the Episcopal Church in Scotland, describes the lack of preparedness. He says that when he was made a deacon by the Bishop of London on Trinity Sunday 1857 he did not know whether or not he had been accepted for ordination until the evening immediately before the service. As he walked into St Paul's Cathedral next morning, a verger flung a surplice in his direction, telling him that he was to read the Gospel (Mason, 1910, p. 13).

Not all bishops were so off-hand about the arrangements for ordinations. Samuel Wilberforce on his arrival in the Diocese of Oxford in 1844 introduced significant improvements to the process. During the ordination week, he lodged all candidates in his palace or close by so that they could share the meals with his chaplains and himself, getting to know each other very well. The period of the examinations was interposed with various devotional exercises, emphasising that they were secondary to spiritual preparation, and further each candidate had a private interview with him (Ashwell, 1880, p. 331-334).

Benson had suggested in his tract on retreats that Ordination retreats should be interposed between the days of examination and ordination, because whilst the examination disclosed what the candidate was bringing to God, the retreat would quicken in his soul 'an earnest longing, and assured hope, a transcendent faith, a grateful love.' This would prepare him to receive the personal gifts from God needed to fulfil the ministerial task given in the sacrament (Benson, 1867, p. 32). At the Church Congress held at Leeds in 1872, the Vicar of Doncaster, the Revd R. F. Pigou, reported that a similar point of view was becoming common amongst the clergy, as the separation of examinations and ordination would make it possible for the ordinands to approach the solemn occasion free from all anxiety and distractions, with the mind wholly and only given to solemn preparation (CCR, 1872, p. 384). The Revd Canon Walsham How, at that time examining chaplain to Bishop Selwyn of Lichfield, supported his plea, asking for the introduction of an intervening period to be used as a time of devotional retirement, accompanied with instruction and private advice and consultation (CCR, 1872, p. 388). The Bishop of Carlisle disagreed. His diocese was at some distance from Oxford and Cambridge, from which many of the ordinands came, and so a double journey which would be entailed for his candidates by the

separation of the testing and the ordaining by an intervening retreat (CCR, 1872, p. 390).

2. Early Ordination Retreats

In practice, the authorities seem to have acted unusually quickly. In 1874 the Preliminary Examination for Candidates for Holy Orders was established, with the intention of removing the “evil” of making ordinands concentrate on the anxieties of the examinations with little time for quiet thought before the service (CofEYB 1892, p. 7). By that time, Canon How as examining chaplain was already leading a retreat of at least one day for candidates, a practice which he was to continue when he became Bishop of Wakefield. In the same year he was invited to lead a retreat for ordination candidates by the then Bishop of Rochester, the Rt Revd Thomas Claughton, at his palace in Danbury, Essex, on the last two ember days, and to preach at the ordination (How, 1898, p. 98). Similarly in 1878, the Revd George Wilkinson made his first visit to Truro at Trinity-tide to give addresses in preparation for the ordination, at which he was the preacher (Mason, 1910, p. 220).

In the same year, William D. MacLagan succeeded Bishop Selwyn at Lichfield, and immediately separated the examination from the ember season by several weeks. He set the whole pastoral work before each man when he saw them separately in his study before accepting them as a candidate, some going forward with redoubled ardour and zeal, whilst others withdrew. Then he devoted the whole of his time in the days immediately before the ordination to those to be ordained. They shared a time of devotional retreat, in which he brought them ‘face to face with the great ideal of service in the sacred office of the Priesthood’ (How, 1911, p. 325). He continued this practice when he became Archbishop of York in 1891, requiring the candidates to keep silence from the previous day until the service began in the great Minster.

Bishop Thorold (1825-1895), who became Bishop of the newly constituted Diocese of Rochester in 1877, also held the examination some weeks before ordination. During the week before the ordination, the candidates assembled at Rochester at his palace at Selsdon to be addressed by his chaplains and others

during the day. After tea, there were conversations in the drawing room on parochial and other practical subjects, and in the evening he himself addressed them, with great effect. This was not a silent retreat, but provided a time of devotional preparation (Simpkinson, 1886, pp. 212-222). Similarly, when he became Bishop of Lincoln in 1885, Edward King arranged three days of special preparation for the ordinands, entrusting the addresses and devotions to some priest experienced in pastoral work. However:

the Bishop always gave the last address on the night before the ordination. He felt an almost overwhelming sense of responsibility, and he had an extraordinary realization of the gifts of ministerial grace. He held in reserve his personal influence because he wanted men to be brought into absolutely direct fellowship with God...But the ordinands were always left in the last silence with God and their own souls face to face, no human influence thrust in between (Randolph, 1918, p. 189).

So the value of ordination retreats came to be generally accepted, and Bishop Woodford could write in 1880, 'we have lived to see a revolution in the conduct of our Ordinations.' The intellectual probation of the candidates had been separated by an interval of time from 'the devotional exercises proper to the days immediately preceding the Ordination' (Ashwell, 1880, p. 331). In a paper to the Church Congress of 1887, the Revd H. B. Bromby said that it had often been 'in the silence and the awful stillness of the ember-tide retreat' the awfulness of what they were about to do had so often struck the candidates and 'centred them on God' (CCR, 1887, p. 364).

These periods of withdrawal before ordination are now taken for granted, as they were already in the Roman Catholic church. Retreats for clergy throughout their ministry were also organised, and to these, as well as retreats for religious and laity, we now turn.

G. The Forty Years up to 1912

The account of the next forty years of the use of what had been a Catholic Reformation practice in the Church of England is one of steady expansion.

1. Clergy Retreats

As in the Roman Catholic church during the rapid expansion of the nineteenth century, there was much improvisation in the period under review. Thus, writing of priests' retreats, Bishop Randall remembered taking retreats at the convent at Ditchingham where William Scudamore was chaplain to the nuns 'who has led so many souls nearer to Christ'. He had also led them at Keble College Oxford, at York, St Augustine's Canterbury and in the chapel of the Mission House at Cowley. He had conducted them for old students at Cuddesdon and Ely, and led them in quiet country parishes in Wiltshire, Somersetshire, Cornwall and Northumberland 'where one or another priest who loving his brother priests has drawn them together to make his village church a resting place for them' (Randall, 1893, p. xxiv). The large Rectory at Harwarden was used for many years for this purpose while the Rev. Stephen Gladstone was its incumbent. The retreat in 1883 was led by Edward King (Harwarden Parish Magazine, Oct. 1883, June 1890), and on that occasion there was an additional retreat for laity living in their own homes. Canon Torr at Eastham, near Birkenhead, held retreats at his house from 1881, as did other clergy, whilst Canon Body at Durham regularly led periods of retirement for clergy, lay men and women (Robinson, 1915, p. 98).

Writing to his wife of the 1876 retreat at St Augustine's Canterbury, Randall says that there were some 30-40 priests present and that 'the college is a quiet and restful place for us, a link between the church of old time and our own day' (Briscoe and Mackey, 1932, p. 160). Later, Walsham How, who by then was Bishop of Bedford, led a clergy retreat at the Castle, Durham, in 1886 and writes:

We had about sixty-five clergy. The grand old castle is a perfect place for it, and the men seemed a very nice set. It is a very humbling work thus addressing so often such a set of earnest men. It seems to turn one inside out, and makes one feel one's own wretched insufficiency. I could only do it by trying to speak to my own soul as much as to others. I am, however, very thankful for some evidence of real help given to some of the men (How, 1898, p. 100).

As to other places, Fr James Skinner left his curacy at St Albans Holbourn in 1861, moved to Newlands near Great Malvern and established there some

almshouses. The chapel was used occasionally for clergy retreats, the first one being led in Fr Benson in 1870. By 1899 retreats there were so popular that three of them were being held a year. Skinner went on to establish the Clergy House of Rest at West Malvern which was used until just after the Second World War for such events, one of which he conducted himself in 1874 (Trench, 1884, pp. 279, 323; Robinson, 1915, p. 98).

Bishops sometimes offered hospitality in their palaces for such events. An example is a publicity leaflet that exists for a thirty-six hour retreat held in 1899 in the Palace at Salisbury, led by the Bishop of Bath and Wells. The participating clergy joined in the offices at the Cathedral, addresses were given in the Bishop's School Chapel, meals were served in the Palace and retreatants were able to use the gardens. It may be however that the retreatants were not actually in residence, as the phraseology used is rather ambiguous (from a leaflet in the Library of Sarum College). It would appear that the clergy had assembled there on previous occasions, as the palace is mentioned as having been used as a venue in the 1892 edition of the *Church of England Year Book*.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the range of places where clergy retreats were held expanded. It included St Deiniol's Library which had clergy retreats as part of its aim right from the start. Indeed its first warden, Rev. Gilbert Cunningham Joyce, spent most of the time away from the library leading clergy study days, retreats and quiet days (Pritchard, 1999, p. 31). The Community of the Resurrection held retreats at its mother house in Yorkshire, although it did not build a retreat house until 1915 (Wilkinson, 1992, p. 98). Another place was 'The Yews' at Beaconsfield, established in 1911 by The Rev W. B. Trevelyan, although this was intended primarily for lay men.

According to the 1915 *Church of England Year Book*, the last time it published a list of clergy retreats which had been held during the previous year, 37 retreats are reported of which 10 had been hosted by Theological Colleges, three each by SSJE at its Oxford home and The Community of the Resurrection Mirfield, two by the sisters at Pleshey, five at the West Malvern House of Rest, one at Gloucester Cathedral and the rest in country parishes. The numbers still

were not great, but they made a substantial contribution to the devotional life of the clergy.

2. Retreats for Religious

It was natural for retreats for Anglican religious to be held, following the example of their Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, and they did not pose such a problem as they held them in their own convents. Such devotions were a regular part of their life and indeed prayer became in the end what some of the nuns were about. For example, the Clewer sisters had opened a House of Retreat at Folkestone in 1876 for prayer, praise, intercession and adoration, dedicated to the Name of Jesus, thus opening out for their members the life of prayer apart from the active ministry (Bonham, 1992, p. 274). Again, the Community of the Holy Cross, who had first come together in Fr Lowder's parish to serve as nurses and social workers, had gradually become a contemplative order, and made retreat work their main activity for the first three decades of the 20th century. In 1913, they built a specially designed establishment at Limpsfield in Kent known as "Holy Cross Retreat House," in the large chapel of which they were able to offer a complete cycle of Mass and Offices. The guests came for rest and retreat and to assist at the ceremonies which were more elaborate than many could experience in their parish churches. The house was closed in 1936 because of heavy expense and the strain on the sisters, and also because other communities were now doing retreat work (Russell, 1957, pp. 37-39).

Associates of the communities were also welcomed into their mother houses for periods of quiet. These were ladies who could not, or did not desire to, become professed, but were interested in the work of the community and gave great practical or financial assistance while living under a simple rule of life (Mumm, 1999, p. 47). William Butler regarded these women as being so important that he continued to lead a retreat each year for the associates of his Community of St. Mary the Virgin at Wantage after he had left the parish to become Dean of Lincoln in 1885. One who attended these events described his addresses as being bracing and practical, instructing his hearers to 'do' the will of God, and to put their fresh resolutions into immediate practice. Another

retreatant commented on the depth and yet simplicity of his addresses, and the wonderful prayer which he gave at the end of each (Butler, 1894, pp. 167, 168).

So the religious and their associates adopted the new form of devotion.

3. Retreats for Laity

As we have seen, throughout Europe, and particularly in France, during the nineteenth century lay people were going on retreat as never before, and retreats were held for them in seminaries, châteaux and parishes, as well as specially built retreat houses. This practice was adopted by the Anglican church here as we will now describe.

Men. Apart from the houses run by the SSJE, for most of the period under review there were hardly any residential retreats for laymen, and even then it would appear that there was just one such retreat for them at the Mission House in 1902 (Cowley Evangelist, December, 1902). This is partially because there were few residential facilities but even more because it was difficult to persuade them to make the effort to come into retreat. However, retreats in daily life were occasionally organised. For instance, the Revd J. Bell Cox of Toxteth Park, Liverpool, speaking to the Church Congress in 1887 the same year that he was imprisoned for his ritualism, told its members about the retreats for business men which he had arranged for many years, just before Holy Week (CCR, 1887, p. 378; Chadwick, 1970, Vol. 2, p. 349). They met on the Saturday evening before Palm Sunday, and then continued in retreat for the whole of the Sunday, ending on the Monday morning. His men ‘used the services during Holy Week and Good Friday to deepen the lessons which they have learnt in retreat.’ Men did however meet residentially for occasional retreats and we read of them coming together for such events in the various editions of the *Church of England Year Book*.

In the early years of the twentieth century, the limited provision of retreats for men was slowly enlarging. SSJE, with help from Lord Halifax, had opened its permanent London house close to Westminster Abbey, and ran week-end retreats frequently. The Community of the Resurrection was firmly established in its home at Mirfield, and offered a programme of retreats for men and priests, although their dedicated retreat house was not to be opened until 1915

(Wilkinson, 1992, p. 98). The time-table for one of these events reveals that the men arrived late on Saturday at the end of their working week and shared in the monastic offices, presumably returning to their work early on the Monday morning. Between August 1910 and June 1911, the members of the Community conducted twenty Parish Missions and eight retreats (Wilkinson, 1992, p. 93). In fact they seem to have eclipsed SSJE as the Community of choice and seem to have been responsible for running more retreats than them.

In 1911, the Rev. W. B. Trevelyan (1853-1929), in the light of his experience as warden of Liddon House, which was a mission for educated young men in London established in memory of Canon Henry Liddon, established a retreat house at Beaconsfield, within easy reach of the city but in a rural setting. Taking up residence there in 1914, he arranged a programme of some 24 retreats a year, opened a retreat house for professional men, although as time went on the number of retreats was halved. The house proved expensive to run, although Trevelyan took no salary himself and subsidised it out of his own pocket, and on his retirement through ill health in 1927 it was closed (Platts, 1934, pp. 57, 68).

Laywomen. Laywomen were better served because of the preponderance of women's communities who could offer some hospitality. This is made clear in the 1892 *Church of England Year Book* where there are listed some 22 residential retreats for laity during the past year, all for ladies. Of these, eight retreats were for women, eight for associates of religious communities, two for deaconesses or church workers, one for governesses, and one for art students. These were held in 15 locations, including one cathedral, nine convents, four Deaconess Houses, and the Retreat House in Lloyd Street. However, what the communities could offer to groups was limited, because of lack of space. For instance, although the Community of the Holy Name at Malvern Link were running retreats for their Associates by 1892, other retreat work was restricted until they were able to open a guest house in 1911. Indeed, their 'Retreats for Ladies' became legendary, the community offering them a style of life such as they were used to at home, where they had servants, and even giving up their own beds to accommodate them (Hannam, 1960, p. 73).

Lady teachers could join the Guild of the Epiphany which held an annual retreat. Their 1896 retreat was taken by Revd Robert Otterly, who was Principal of Pusey House. Based upon Ephesians, it was centred on the three stages of prayer, the purgative way, the illuminative and the unitative way. It had the teacher's problems in mind but deals more with their difficulties as a person and with their own moral teaching rather than matters of faith (Ottley, 1896). The same author gave a series of addresses for those in university work (Ottley, 1887).

Clergy wives were obvious candidates for retreats. We have details of such a retreat which Edward King led using the Chapel of the Sisters of the Church at Kilburn from October 9th-13th 1883. It is most likely that it was residential, as it ran from a Tuesday evening to the Saturday morning, although it may just be that the ladies came into the Convent each day, sleeping at home. He told them that their role was to support their husband's ministry, rather than developing their own potential. Throughout he emphasised the uniqueness of the role of the clergy wife who was called to model for the parishioners the pattern of marriage, and he warned them not to get too busy about good works, but to have time for their husband, their sons (no daughters are mentioned!) and for themselves. His stress was on practical goodness, and he spoke in a simple, direct and homely manner (King, 1912, pp. 13-93).

Another particular category was the alumni of certain schools. So we find William Butler leading two retreats for the members of the Guild of St. Scholastica, who are described as girls who had recently left St Mary's school at Wantage, 'and [who] were desirous to live up to the high standard which had been set before them during their school life' (Butler, 1905, preface). These took place in successive years during the forty days after Easter and were residential, using the dormitory accommodation in the school, with the addresses being given in the school chapel (Butler, 1905). The first was in 1882, and seems to have lasted for two days, perhaps a weekend, during which Butler gave one introductory address and four meditations on our call to obey God. He also gave two hour-long instructions, one on prayer and one on Holy Communion as a sacrifice.

Mixed Groups. Retreats for presumably mixed groups were to be held after the Vauxhall model, strictly non-residential, the retreatants living at home. Here, again, King provides us with a pattern, having taken two of these for his friend Rev. R. T. West, who was Incumbent of St Mary Magdalene's Paddington, in Lent 1883 and 1884. In his first parish retreat, King painted a rosy Victorian picture of the success of the Church of England, which, because of the Empire, was bringing the episcopate, which for him was of the essence of the church, to the USA, to India, Australia and New Zealand. However, he warned that there was a tendency in contemporary society to forget God, as shown by the growth of atheism, moral confusion, and the breaking up of the marriage law as the divorce rate steadily increased. So it was the duty of the churchman to observe the Sabbath, not allowing the newspapers, which were not about God, to dominate our thinking. The addresses at the second parish retreat were more theological, the subject being the resurrection.

Other Approaches. Retreats for clergy and laity continued in much the same way as in the previous century, although they were challenged by other approaches. In his address to the 1907 Congress during the course of a debate on 'The means of Spiritual Revival', Canon Barnes-Lawrence, whilst recommending the practice of retreat, seems to have more strongly advocated Diocesan Conventions, modelled upon those which had been held at Keswick for the past thirty years, as times of withdrawal and renewal (Barnes-Lawrence, 1907, p. 476). Another speaker in the debate, the Rev. F. Keeling Scott, gave details of the success of such an event held recently in Norwich Diocese when 600 clergy and 1,000 lay workers had gathered together. This seems to have been a forerunner of the residential conferences, some held at holiday camps in the off-season, which have been a feature of diocesan life for many years now.

H. Quiet days

In the life of the Roman Catholic church days of recollection became important for people who could not afford the time for a retreat. In practice in the Church of England, for many clergy and laity the most that could be hoped for in the way of a retreat was one day away from the demands of the working life, and,

as we will now see, these Quiet Days came to form an important part of the spiritual practice offered to the nineteenth-century Anglican and to their successors in the following century.

In the *Church of England Year Book* for 1892, 73 quiet days for clergy and 78 for lay people are listed, figures which by 1902 had grown to 75 and 131 respectively. Remembering that these probably only reflect a proportion of the events which actually happened, these statistics are an indication of the popularity of this form of devotion. Such days might be regarded as mini-retreats, having a liturgical framework which usually centred upon the Eucharist and the recitation of Morning and Evening prayer, and including two or more addresses followed by periods of silence for private meditation. However, because they were so short, their dynamic was different from that of a full retreat. Some might agree with the Revd. A.E. Barnes-Lawrence, who in addressing the 1903 Church Congress claimed that Quiet Days were a palliative rather than a remedy; they were too short, too noisy, with sheer Babel at lunch time as friends met, and their effect was defeated by stress of the long journey there and back again (*CCR* 1903, p. 476).

Despite their limitations, Bishop Thorold made great use of Quiet Days during his episcopate at Rochester, some held at his own home at Selsdon near Croydon which was noted for its incomparable tranquil seclusion (Simpkinson, 1886, p. 103). He himself wrote that Quiet Days:

are increasingly felt to be a great help. I nominate a certain number of clergymen to undertake the duty, and usually take three or four myself every year. It knits bishop to clergy in a close an [sic.] holy way. Once a year at Rochester Cathedral I have a quiet day for clergymen's wives, and this has been much valued (Simpkinson, 1886, p. 207).

One such day which he led was held at Clapham on Feb. 17th 1880. Ninety-eight clergy came to the Communion Service and the first address, and about the same number were present at the three o'clock service. Two days later at Bebbington, some 60-70 clergy were there for Holy Communion, but the Bishop comments that he himself was too tired to enjoy it (Simpkinson, 1886, p. 206). On October 20th and 21st 1886, the Bishop led a quiet day for Clergy wives at Rochester Cathedral, attended by some 40-50 ladies. It began with an address at 7.30 pm on

the theme 'Where art thou - in thy conscience, in thy will, in thy understanding, in the surrender of thy heart?' The next morning there was Holy Communion with address at 11.00am and again at 3.00pm, the theme being 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith' (Simpkinson, 1886, p.210). Day retreats were also arranged at important churches around the diocese for lay people (Simpkinson, 1886, p. 212)

Bishop Edward King thought that one-day retreats for all the clergy of a Diocese, perhaps for two or three hundred at a time, brought their own particular blessing, and such large gatherings became a familiar part of Victorian church life (Randall, 1893, no page numbers). So, for example, the Bishop of London called his clergy together at St Paul's Cathedral in February 1879, and Edward Bickersteth recorded this description of the event:

We had a most blessed Quiet Day last Thursday at St Paul's. A most excellent, touching, heart-searching address from our Bishop, chiefly on the dangers which beset all ministerial work, his own as Bishop and ours as Parish priests. I do not know when I have felt Christ so near, or God's eyes so clearly resting on one's life and work. Then the quiet for prayer, with so many hundreds of clergy praying round, was very impressive. Dear Bishop Thorold's words in the afternoon, on "Thy will be done"...were very powerful, more finished and ornate and balanced, but much less pathetic than our Bishop's. Still the whole was most profitable, most subduing, most humbling (Aglionby, 1907, p. 40).

The following year, the Bishop of Lichfield, William Maclagan, appointed Wednesday March 3rd, 1880, as a 'Special Day of Devotion for the Clergy of the Diocese...that they should meet together on that day at certain centres, for the purpose of united Prayer, Exhortation, and Meditation' (Mursell, 2001, Vol.2, p. 222). The day before, he had given his charge to the whole diocese, and on this next day his clergy were 'to be on their knees together before God.' Bishop Walsham How addressed those gathered at Lichfield, and Bickersteth led at Derby, which was still part of the diocese at that date (Aglionby, 1907, p.44). The Church of England Handbook for 1892 lists a number of such large gatherings held the previous year, one led by the Bishop of Bedford for the East London Deaneries for 460 priests, and another at Bishop King's Lincoln, conducted by the Revd Charles Gore, who was then Warden of Pusey House,

which was attended by 250 clergy. Two years later, Bishop Walsham How led this Lincoln gathering, with some 200 present (CofEYB 1892, 1894).

It was this form of devotion which Bishop King followed when leading a retreat day for over 150 bishops assembled at the Lambeth Conference in July 1897. The timetable included Holy Communion with first address, Morning prayer with second address, at midday the Litany preceded the third address, and the day ended with Evensong and a fourth address. The addresses were scholarly, suited to the company, but also devotional and challenging, and the Bishops “sat at his feet with great delight” (Russell, 1912, p. 241; 311-336). He reminded his auditors that the purpose of a Quiet Day was to be with God, something they had little time to do in their busy lives. After reviewing passing fashions in the field of ethics over the last fifty years, he suggested that, like the Apostles who had gathered together around their Lord after their first missionary journey, these Bishops were here to give an account to God of what they had done and taught during this time. They were to help people to move beyond the externals of religion to a living knowledge of its inward truth, which was Christ himself. The church was the temple of his living presence, his body within which all Christians were united; and his Bride, to be made holy by him. The worldwide Anglican church was in a privileged position to gently guide people in their spiritual lives, and many were looking towards it. An eyewitness records “The bowed form of the speaker, the sweet, sad voice weakened by age, the face lighting up with the anticipated glory of life immortal, the stillness unbroken by a sound...can never fade away from the memory” (Russell, 1912, p. 336).

These large one-day retreats were also arranged for lay people, and the *Church of England Year Book* for 1892 tells us that the Association of Church Workers had held two such events, each attracting 200 people; that in the Bath and Wells Diocese there had been three gatherings for clergy and Church Workers, with attendances totalling 750; also 120 clergy and lay people had met at Ironbridge, and another 300 in Llandaff; that in the Diocese of St Albans a total of 170 Sunday School teachers had been present over five events; and finally that the Girls Friendly Society had attracted 395 women and girls to such

a gathering (CofEYB 1892). Clearly, such assemblies were regarded as being of great value.

I. Parish Missions

In the Roman Catholic church, Parish Retreats and Parish Missions went alongside one another, and the various Orders were engaged in both activities. It was also true of the established church in this country, and indeed the addresses given by Fr Benson in the Parish of Methyr-Tydfil in 1886 were in preparation for such an event (Benson, 1887). Therefore at this point, although it is not immediately to do with our Research Question, I will briefly recount their history.

The story of Parish Missions is told by Una Hannam in her history of the Community of the Holy Name and the phenomenon is also the theme of Dieter Voll's book *Catholic Evangelicalism* (Voll, 1963; Hannam, 1972). Initially the man involved was Robert Aitken, incumbent of Pendeen in Cornwall since 1849, and then of Wednesbury, and his convert Richard Twigg, who was at first curate of Wednesbury from 1854 and then its incumbent from 1856. Their teaching combined a Puseyite stress of the importance of the church and a Methodist belief in the importance of God's grace received in a conversion-like experience. Twigg is probably the priest who was the first to conduct parochial missions in this country in the manner which became common. He in turn influenced George Body who while he was only a curate was the most influential preacher in the 1869 Mission to London, people queuing outside All Saints Margaret Street to hear him. He was made Canon of Durham in 1883, and there continued his work of leading both missions and retreats. His continued interest in retreats is shown in the preface which he wrote for *A Handbook in Retreat* published in 1888 in which he says that no devotional book can 'guide us profitably in the seasons of retreat' unless we are submitted to God through his Holy Spirit, but that this book would be helpful in doing just that (Members of the Community of St Margaret's, 1888, p. viii). Another who was involved in missions was Charles Bodington whose second curacy was at Wednesbury and who succeeded as vicar when Twigg died in 1879. A fourth notable participant was G. H. Wilkinson,

who is mentioned above, who had the great gift of being able to communicate the gospel to large audiences. The mission which he held in his own parish of Bishop Auckland, set the pattern for similar Anglican events, and he was the major figure in the 1874 London mission. These men were leaders of a group of about thirty who supported this particular approach to Evangelism (Hannam, 1972, pp. 1 - 9), and all were also noted retreat preachers.

Although the Twelve Day London Mission of 1869, covering some 112 parishes, was not an exclusively Anglo-Catholic affair, both SSC and SSJE were deeply involved. The teaching stressed a sacramental religion, with the renewal of baptismal vows was a prominent feature; auricular confession and the regular use of a spiritual director was encouraged (Parsons, 1988a, p. 228). Benson was again prominent in planning the second mission to London in Lent 1874, which had been called for by the Bishops of London, Rochester and Winchester (Parsons, 1988a, p. 228). A five day retreat for the missionaries was held before the event at the Mission House at Cowley St John, and a Quiet Day of Devotion was held at St Paul's Cathedral for the clergy of the Diocese (Cowley St John Parish Magazine Feb 1874). An eyewitness account of this latter event was given by the Revd Maurice Davies (Davies, 1876, pp. 380-385). He records how it was set within the Liturgical structure of Morning Prayer, Holy Communion, and Evensong, and that the speakers included William Walsham How, Revd George Body and Fr Benson. After Walsham How's address there was a long period of silent prayer, the stillness of which, Davies recalled, contrasted with the roar of the City outside. On returning to the Cathedral after a period of refreshment, he was struck by the fact that 'inside it looked quite like a foreign church to notice the clergy prostrate in silent prayer, or intent upon a book of devotion' (Davies, 1876, p. 382).

Walsham How had spoken at the Church Congress the previous year, in which he had commended parish missions as a way of winning souls for Christ, and of deepening the realism and earnestness of many, if the preparation work had been done effectively (How, 1898, p. 101). He was an active missionary and retreat giver, and during the year 1875 was involved in two parish missions, led retreats at Bourton and Harwarden, gave an Ember address at a gathering for

clergy at Market Harborough, spoke to lay Church workers in St Paul's Cathedral, spent several days in May addressing ordination candidates at Ely, doing this again in December at Lincoln (preaching the ordination sermon on both occasions) and was at Bangor for four days giving meditations to a large gathering of clergy. Eventually he withdrew from mission work, but continued with conducting retreats (How, 1898, pp. 99, 109).

Some measure of the growth of both movements is given by figures recorded in 1892 edition of the *Official Year Book of the Church of England*. We learn that during the period November 1890 to November 1891, there were 243 Parochial Missions in London and the Provinces, compared with 26 retreats for clergy and 25 for laity, and 93 quiet days for clergy, with a further 78 for laity. Clearly, the two movements, one devotional and one evangelistic, were developing in a healthy symbiosis amongst those of an Anglo-Catholic persuasion.

J. Some Retreat Leaders

A good retreat leader, whether Roman Catholic or Anglican, does more than give a series of addresses. He is responsible for maintaining the gentle discipline of quiet, leading the worship and giving spiritual direction in the group. Nevertheless, his addresses are important and there are certain qualities which they will have.

Anglo-Catholic. Firstly, the retreat leaders were all priests or bishops and were mainly of a Catholic mind. Thus, the Rev Edward Fraser Russell, Curate of St Alban Holborn, gave a retreat in 1877 to a group of ladies at The Orphanage, Bournemouth, run by the Sisters of Bethany, Lloyd Square.¹⁸ It was about the Intermediate State after death and almost Roman Catholic in tone. He urged his hearers to use the silence well, in order to bring home truths of immense value to themselves and their loved ones. It gave a valuable connected line of thought and for some it would be their last retreat (Russell, 1877). In 1896 he gave another retreat at the Mother House of the Sisters. This time it is Catholic but not so militantly so, and its tone is summed up in this phrase, 'I can, and ought, and

¹⁸ The Orphanage was used for retreats until 1935.

will, by the grace of God, become a wholly and better and wholly new creature' (Russell, 1896, p. 3).

The Revd George Congreve (1835–1918) was also a notable Anglo-Catholic. He gave a series of sermons to his fellow members of SSJE at their Christmas retreat in 1879 under the title 'The Incarnation and the Religious Life'. After dealing with the reality of the birth of Christ and the love of God which this shows, it goes on to consider various aspects of the Christian life – Grace, Penitence, Holy Fear and the Life of Faith. Then it dealt with problems met in community before showing how the religious life reveals the life of the Incarnate Lord. Finally it demonstrated how the life of entire dedication is possible under the vows of Religion (Congreve, 1930). Any linkage with the *Exercises* is minimal. He was quite well known as a retreat giver although very little of his work was published.

The Revd J. P. F. Davidson was President of the Guild of All Souls, as Anglo-Catholic as one could get. He seems to have specialised in retreats for the clergy and we have six series of addresses ranging from those given at the House of Rest at West Malvern in 1884 through to Cuddesdon in 1897. He dealt with themes such as the Allegory of the Vine and the Branches, St Paul as an example of the Priestly Life, and the Priesthood of Jesus as portrayed in the Epistle to the Hebrews. After an introductory address, he gave three addresses a day containing an exposition of the passage and any special points which apply to the retreatant. He seemed to assume a celibate priesthood which functions within the church rather than the world and whose ministry was mainly sacramental, a typical Catholic approach (Davidson, 1903).¹⁹

Popular Preachers. Secondly, they tended to be popular preachers, which is not surprising as the gifts needed were the same. Thus Walsham How was ordained in 1846 and was incumbent of Whittington, Shropshire, until his personal energy and enthusiasm led to his being made a suffragan Bishop of London in 1879 under the title of the Bishop of Bedford, and then Bishop of Wakefield in 1888. His retreat addresses were edited by his son, were all the same length and seem

¹⁹ This High Church bias was to be a bone of contention for the first 100 years of the practice. It is true that the practice of retreat was embraced by some Evangelicals such as the Bickersteth cousins and Bishop Thorold, but these were the exception and noted accordingly.

to have been intended for personal use. Indeed it is difficult to know how accurately they reflect what was said and how far they have been modified to fit the published format. They show little of Ignatius' influence, being more concerned with addressing their hearers situations. However, they do reveal a strong and simple faith (How, 1898). Canon Charles Body is another case in point. He was primarily a preacher and eventually specialised in Parish Missions, but did some retreats on the way.

Non-Ignatian. Thirdly, retreat leaders did not always follow Richard Benson's advice that their retreat be Ignatian. Benson himself only followed it up to a point. He had the gift of being able to speak without notes, keeping the audience interested for a whole hour at a time. As a result there are few notes of his many retreats. Nevertheless, thanks to people's ability with shorthand, St Edward's House has in its library many volumes 'of these astonishingly profound and closely-woven spontaneous discourses' written out most neatly, 'as they came from him in a stream of inspiration from the inner resources stored up by his own meditations' (Smith, 1980, p. 28). Ignatius' plan is never far from his mind, but in his later addresses it is obscured by the richness of his own thought and the need to help people at whatever stage of life they may be.

Thomas Thellusson Carter (1808 – 1901) belonged to the first generation of the Oxford Movement and was greatly influenced by the 'Tracts for the Times.' He was by nature a studious man though perhaps not a distinguished theologian. A prolific writer of sermons, many volumes of which were subsequently published, he was also the author of treatises on aspects of spirituality and devotional books for the laity. Like many Victorian clergymen, one suspects he lacked a sense of humour (Bonham, 1992, p. 95). All of this is reflected by his retreat addresses, and although he gave many retreats, we only have his addresses for the first ten years. These show him trying to weld the early ones after the example of St Ignatius, but quickly he transforms them into a format which deals with the immediate spiritual needs of his hearers, especially when talking to religious about the problems of living in community (Carter, 1893).

Richard William Randall (1824–1906) was ordained a year later than How. He was incumbent of St Mary Magdalene, West Lavington, before becoming the

first vicar of Clifton, Bristol from 1868 until after 25 years he was made Dean of Chichester in 1892, a post which he held until 1902. The subjects of his meditations fit in well with the Ignatian examples and his approach is theological but practical. He lays great stress on the process of meditation when the soul is really alone with God, as at birth or death, and therefore any input from the outside world is to be avoided. One is to choose one's subject the night before and to meditate as if speaking directly to God. Resolutions are important, and should be made carefully, not in haste and after due advice, but remembering that it is written on the heart and memory of God and is made with Him alone. He ends his meditations with a consideration of life after death (Randall, 1893).

We have already glimpsed the warm and seemingly emotionally charged atmosphere of Edward King's retreats. He was a leader of retreats throughout his ministry: during the time when he was Principal of Cuddesdon Theological College from 1863, whilst Regius Professor of Pastoral Theology from 1873, and whilst Bishop of Lincoln from 1885 until his death in 1910. A speaker at the Church Congress in 1887 shared this reminiscence of an early clergy retreat led by him:

I remember once a grey-haired clergyman coming and sitting at the feet of the conductor...[this man] full of years, honour, and experience, came like a little child to take the counsel given in that retreat. When the addresses were ended, the conductor, who is now the Lord Bishop of Lincoln, having alluded to this good man's presence, thanked him for the example he had given to the younger clergy, went down on his knees and asked the aged priest to dismiss us with his blessing. He did so with tears running down his cheeks. It is a scene which will never be forgotten by those who witnessed it (*CCR*, 1887, p. 375).

King's talks seem to have been more discursive in character, without clear points for meditation, but, as we have seen, he inspired his listeners to enter enthusiastically into their times of reflection. In addresses which Owen Chadwick identifies as having been given to a group of clergy in his diocese, King focuses on the situation of his hearers, encouraging them to show great pastoral awareness, and to recognise the full potential of their parishioners, not least those of the 'labouring classes' who were, he suggested, the future rulers of our society (King, 1932, pp. 69-78; Chadwick, 1990, p. 292). In an age which

often seemed to encourage self-abasement, he devoted two addresses to the importance of developing our personalities, for 'each one has by the will of God a separate, eternal, personal existence' Another address, based upon John Wesley's 116th sermon 'On the causes of the Inefficiency of Christians', he identifies these as ignorance of the Gospel, the need for discipline, and the want of self denial, deficiencies which the parish priest should help his people to overcome. In the final address, King seems to be speaking to the older clergy, who, because they did not have the pension provisions which clergy have today, carried on in their parishes to a relatively advanced age when they no longer had the energy for an active ministry. He tells them that they might spend more time in the unveiled presence of God, and must learn to work through others. If the aged priest can no longer 'touch by his sermons, he can do so by perseverance in holy things' (King, 1932, p. 78). In all of this, King shows a wise understanding of the practicalities of parish work.

Archdeacon Cecil J. F. Bourke did not follow Ignatius' scheme. He used the addresses of a retreat which he gave at Alverton to answer the question 'How do I know God's will?' The result was a careful logical presentation over six addresses, giving conservative, sound and practical teaching, leading naturally to the making of resolutions which were to be definite and practical, with the right motive of giving glory to God (Bourke, 1911, pp. 99-162; 277). For a retreat for clergy, his theme was 'Sacrifice,' using the typographical method employed by Davidson, and he used the various words used to describe immolation in the Bible as a basis for direct teaching about the work of a priest. He gave other retreats to the Society of the Holy Name which was a company of teachers, a retreat for a community on the Office of the Visitation of the Sick, and a quiet day for a community.

In short, very few conductors heeded Benson's admonition that the addresses should follow the scheme of St Ignatius. In 1916, reviewing retreats before that date, a member of SSJE, the Revd W. H. Longridge, said there had been three types of retreat. The first was an Expository method, expounding a particular passage or passages of scripture. This had the disadvantage that the dynamic of the passages did not coincide with that of the retreat. The second was

the Topical method, quoting the retreats by the late J. P. F. Davidson. This was useful for an annual retreat but did not fulfil the purpose of a retreat. The third was the method which was the one used by Ignatius himself and was the method which alone fulfilled the purpose of a retreat which was alignment with the will of God (Longridge, 1916a, p. 5). He is right to make the Ignatian method the foundation one, but to insist that every retreat follow the example of the saint ignores the vast experience of numerous conductors who had been content with talking from their own experience about what worked and what did not work in the Christian life. Perhaps this is the particular charism of the Anglican retreat; certainly most conductors worked this way.

Conservative. Fourthly, it will already be obvious that many of the addresses given by nineteenth-century conductors reflect the fact that by temperament, these early retreat givers tended to be conservative both in theology and social mores. For instance, in the furore which had followed the publication of the controversial *Essays and Reviews* in 1860, Pusey, who did as much as anyone to ensure that retreats became accepted, had joined forces with the Evangelical Bishop Denison and with Bishop Wilberforce in drawing up a declaration which was eventually signed by 10,906 clergymen. This proclaimed that the Church of England was Catholic in maintaining ‘without reserve or qualification the inspiration and divine authority of the Bible,’ and in teaching that both the punishment of the ‘cursed’ and the rewards of the righteous are everlasting (Chadwick, 1970, Vol II, p. 84). These views are strongly maintained in his addresses during the 1868 retreat which he gave to members of the Companions of the Love of Jesus. The retreat is well suited to its hearers and he follows the spirit of the Exercises whilst not retaining their form (Pusey, 1885).

William John Butler (1818–1894) was vicar of Wantage from 1846 until he became Dean of Lincoln in 1885. He was a typical Oxford Movement incumbent, and naturally turned to retreat work when it became available. I have already shown him at work and would point out his conservative attitude to the social issues of his day. In particular, he regarded anything in the way of intellectual freedom for women as dangerous (e.g. Butler, 1905, p. 122). Here he

is typical of men of his generation who regarded retreats as a way of preventing young people from getting too far out of line.

Canon Henry Bromby who followed Randall as vicar of All Saints, Clifton, temperamentally belonged to the next generation of retreat conductors. Gifted as a spiritual director and confessor, and greatly in demand as a mission preacher and retreat giver, he was more extremely Anglo-Catholic in theology than his predecessor, but more liberal in politics, being chairman of the local branch of the Christian Socialist Union (Mace, 1913, pp. 114-118). He conducted a five-day retreat for members of the Epiphany Guild, at the House of Retreat, Lloyd Square, at Epiphany-tide 1897, encouraging them to reflect upon their professional experience as teachers (Mace, 1913, pp. 195-299). Bromby's approach was gentle, encouraging and affirming. He said that there was no election by God to destruction, but an election to privilege – the privilege of service (Mace, 1913, p. 212).

The man who took retreat work into the next period was Bishop Charles Gore (1853-1932). He was librarian at Pusey House from 1884 until 1893, forming the Community of the Resurrection in 1892. He became vicar of Radley near Oxford in 1893 and he remained Superior of the community until he was made Bishop of Worcester in 1902. This was followed by being the first Bishop of Birmingham in 1905 and then he was Bishop of Oxford from 1911 until his retirement in 1919. His stance vis-à-vis his fellow conductors is signalled by his editing the book *Lux Mundi* in 1890. This shook many traditional Puseyites as it accepted the views of higher critics and therefore won the disapproval of many. This meant that such a critical approach lay behind his retreat addresses, although it did not form the main substance of them. Fr. Holland, who was a member of Gore's Community of the Resurrection, walked out of a retreat being given to them by Fr Benson when Benson expounded the traditional teaching on hell (Wilkinson, 1992, p. 33). In 1892 he took a Parish Mission at Walsall but only took one more, devoting what time he had available to leading retreats for the clergy (Prestige, 1935, p. 141). His numerous retreats have not been printed, but they reveal a great gift as a personal teacher and would have marked him out

as amongst the first retreat conductors to accept modernist views (Prestige, 1935, p. 260).

One conductor who criticised Gore for his openness to the findings of critical theology was a member of his community, the Revd Hugh Benson. In a retreat given at the House of Retreat, Lloyd Square, (it is not clear whether it is for clergy or laity), he says that the object of our existence is that we may come back to God from whom we originally came, that this is both difficult, for the life of so many saints is one long Gethsemane, and is easy because we rely upon the grace of God. The purpose of this retreat was not to learn new truth but to concentrate on the easy past and to learn to wait, going out from it with a new sense of God's goodness. The critical approach to scripture was dreary, whereas the devotional approach revealed a book 'full of the reflected Glory of God, charged with the depths of spiritual meaning' (Benson, 1902, pp. 4, 5, 35). He left the Church of England for Rome three years later.

These are just some of the conductors in the Church of England who had their addresses published. In the main the people who led retreats were ordinary clergy, rather conservative in character, who paid scant attention to St Ignatius but who shared their faith with their fellows, clergymen, laymen and women. They came on retreat because they found it of use in their daily lives and made their experience available to others.

K. Conclusion

So by the end of the fifty years from the first silent retreat in 1858 to the end of the Edwardian period we have seen the Catholic Reformation practice of retreat being adopted by a group of Catholic minded Anglican clergy and adapted by them for use in this country. What had initially been the preserve of a small group of Anglo-Catholic clergy was now being shared in a variety of ways with priests, religious and laity, and was being widely welcomed as an expression of piety which was suitable for Anglicans. True, most participants were themselves drawn from the catholic wing of the church, but others, both Evangelicals and moderates, were beginning to value this corporate but intensely personal form of devotion. A number of men, both parish priests and religious, were developing

their expertise as conductors and were giving a valued ministry, although no training for them was available. Vicarages and bishops palaces, colleges and schools, had been pressed into service for residential retreats, and religious houses were, as far as their limited space allowed, offering hospitality to those seeking withdrawal from the world. There were now at least three dedicated retreat houses, and other facilities existed into which retreats happily fitted. Parish retreats were being offered alongside parish missions, making the experience available to those who because of lack of time, the cost, and the shortage of facilities, could not go away from home. Three religious orders with a particular apostolate in this field had come into being, although the potential of the recently formed Community of the Resurrection was yet to be realised. All of this had grown out of the tradition of silence as it had evolved in Catholic Europe, and paralleled contemporary developments there although inevitably within a church which thought of itself as both Catholic and Reformed, a different ethos had emerged. The preached retreat was the almost universal form, with addresses which reflected Anglican concerns and needs, and the worship was shaped by the Book of Common Prayer rather than the Latin Mass. Except amongst the more extreme Ritualists, the more advanced forms of Ultramontane devotion were eschewed. As many of the conductors were parish priests, the addresses were concerned with the areas within which lay their expertise, namely pastoral and devotional matters, rather than the niceties of the Ignatian sequence. Moreover, none of these changes denied the fundamental principle which lay behind the practice of spiritual withdrawal, which was allowing people the space to do their own personal business with God with the support of their fellow retreatants.

The retreat world was poised for the next great development which was once again to come through the influence of the Roman Catholic church, as we now recount in the next chapter.

Chapter 3. Establishing the Retreat Tradition, 1912-1962

The story of the next period begins with a young Jesuit, Charles Plater, and the influence he had on all the churches, especially the established church. This was followed by significant growth in the availability of retreat during the 1920s, due in part to Plater's example, up to the beginning of the Second World War, when the movement passed through a period of set-back. However, there followed a further period of expansion up to 1962, which can be attributed to the small growth in the church attendance and vocations to the ministry experienced by all the churches in Western Europe. By the end of the period we can say that the practice of retreat was part of the established tradition of the Church of England, with this form of devotion being available to everyone, although still more often used by Anglo-Catholics than the rest of the church. This chapter is therefore divided into three parts, 1912 – 1920, 1921 – 1940 and 1941 – 1962.

Part 1. 1912 - 1920

A. Retreats for the People ²⁰

Plater had borrowed a key idea which can be attributed to the Jesuit Fr Joseph Archambault. During the eighteen-seventies, in the face of the repeated failures of the Roman Catholic Church on the Continent to attract artisans into the life of parishes, Archambault suggested that only the working class could reach out to the working class. It was therefore necessary, he said, to develop an apostolic elite from amongst them:

a nucleus of Christians tempered to resist the assaults of the foes, impregnated with the apostolic spirit, ready to waive their personal interests, to penetrate the masses, to strengthen the faith that totters, to rally the scattered men of good will (Plater, 1912, p. 21).

The way to train them, he suggested, was by taking them away for three days of intensive retreat.

From 1880 onwards, retreat houses for working men were built in France, and carefully planned and sustained steps were taken to encourage men to come

²⁰ See my paper 'Charles Plater and the Practice of Retreat in the Church of England,' published in *Recusant History* (Tyers, 2009).

for training. This initiative was so successful that it was expanded into Belgium, where between 1902 and 1911 nearly 99,000 men attended weekend retreats (Plater, 1912, p. 288). The pattern of these events was adapted to the interests of the labouring classes, and therefore on the first evening they shared in supper, cards, billiards, pipes and beer, before embarking on an intensive three day programme of silent devotions. These included four meditations a day, which were based upon the first week of Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, and aimed to show how the love of God 'raises man above himself, ennobles his life, and gives him eternal happiness' (Plater, 1908, p. 59). The retreatants, it was claimed, went back to their parishes renewed and enthusiastic, spear-heading a significant rise in the number of men attending Mass.

In 1903, whilst still in training, Charles Plater visited the Belgian houses, and was enthused by what he saw. Writing to a friend about the work going on in them, he said 'it's really unspeakable – the cure for all our troubles, I'm sure. The results [are] really miraculous' (Martindale, 1922, p. 62). He returned convinced that, by means of these retreats, men could be encouraged to be involved in all kinds of Catholic work, and indeed that the promotion of such retreats was the supreme work at that time in the mission of the Roman Catholic church. He began to publicise the idea with great energy and enthusiasm, addressing meetings and writing articles for various newspapers and journals.

He was motivated by a concern which was wider than the devotional or the evangelistic. He was one of those who in 1909 founded 'The Catholic Social Guild,' seeking to challenge the ruthless competition and aggressive self-interest of modern industrial society, one result of which they suggested was the dehumanization of the working classes. They were also aware of the dangers of an atheistic socialism. They aimed therefore to encourage a return to the Catholic values which had been expressed in the medieval guilds, a system which in their view integrated church and society in one common purpose (Wraith, 1997, p. 532).²¹ Plater expounded this fundamental philosophy in an article published in the *Hibbert Journal* for October 1908, entitled 'A Great Social Experiment'. Plater argued that what was needed was some bond which would unite the whole

²¹ They eventually went on to establish at Oxford a working men's College, a Catholic equivalent of the socialist Ruskin College, which was named after Plater himself after his untimely death.

of society, 'some worthy object of enthusiasm or devotion behind the aimless passage of years, some spiritual force or ideal' (Plater, 1908, p.50). This common purpose was, he claimed, being inculcated in the retreat houses of Belgium and France, and:

[the results] of these retreats are as wide as life itself; and one of these effects, which though secondary, is not unimportant, has been an improvement in the material condition of the working classes (Plater, 1908, p. 62).

Determined to establish similar houses in this country, he managed to enlist the interest of employers who were willing to give financial support and to allow their men the necessary time off work, and, with the support of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Salford, he opened a house at Compstall Hall, near Stockport in 1908. By 1910, these retreats were being so successful that the work was moved to the larger Oakwood Hall, also in Lancashire, whilst a similar house, Thornbury, was opened in London in 1911 (Plater, 1912, pp. 289, 126). The programme for one of these events, reproduced in the Appendix, reveals a very busy schedule, with little solitariness and time for personal reflection. Although based upon the first week of the *Exercises*, it would seem to be far from the spirit of them, being too directive and allowing little time for personal reflection. It may well have been thought however that the retreatants, who lived and worked in the main in crowded conditions, would have had little previous opportunity to experience solitude, and so would not cope well with prolonged periods of silent meditation.

In 1912, Plater published a book entitled *Retreats for the People*. This was a history of retreats in the Roman Catholic church written not from the point of view of the clergy but the laity, pointing out the continuity of work with lay retreats since the Catholic Reformation in the sixteenth century. He included a glowing and uncritical account of the work of the houses in France and Belgium and afterward recently in this country. This book seems to have made a big impact on both Anglicans and Free Churchmen, and encouraged a prominent Methodist, Sir Henry Lunn, to devote a large section to its ideas in his own book, in which he argued the case for the retreat method as the answer to society's ills (Lunn, 1913).

Many members of the Church of England had long felt concerned about the lack of success in their work amongst the labouring classes, a concern perhaps heightened by the founding of the Labour Party in 1906.²² Although there were those who like Charles Gore saw socialist theories as a possible way of reforming the inequalities of society, others shared with the Roman church a distrust of socialism, and it may have been that they saw in the strategy which Plater was advocating a way of combating its perceived dangers. I have found no evidence to suggest that Anglicans adopted the Catholic Guild's medievalism, but some embraced the retreat method, apparently without making any attempt to assess whether it could be transferred from Catholic Belgium to Reformed England.

Over the next seven years or so there were a number of initiatives within the established church which can be directly traced back to the influence of Plater's volume and through it to the practice of the Roman Catholic church, and we now give an account of them.

B. Following Plater, 1913-1920

1. Making the Case for Retreats

As was reported in the previous chapter, retreats for businessmen had been offered since the 1870s, and in 1911 Canon W.B. Trevelyan had opened 'The Yews' at Beaconsfield as a retreat house especially for young men working in the city. Attention now turned to the possibility of retreats for working men. The July 1913 issue of *Men's Magazine*, published by the 24,000 strong Church of England Men's Society, as well as giving information about already well established retreats for men at Cuddesdon, Cowley, Mirfield and Leeds, announced that other retreats were being held in the Diocese of York, in Southwark, (arranged by the Diocesan Evangelistic Council), London (sponsored by the London Working Men's Retreat Association), Manchester and

²² Recent sociological research seems to indicate that in fact the working class were not as alienated from the church as it appeared. Whilst not often attending their parish church, many had a strong identification with it, and, as chaplains discovered during the war, there was, along with great ignorance of the Christian teachings, a strong implicit religious sense. See the authors reviewed by Sarah Williams in chapter 1 of her study of religious observance in Southwark (Williams, 1999).

Birmingham, some obviously aimed at artisans (*Men's Magazine*, July 1913, pp. 6, 9, 32).

The example of the Belgian retreat houses was also mentioned in the July 1913 edition. In that October, the Society's president, the Archbishop of York, Cosmo Lang, preached a sermon at Cardiff to 1,000 of its assembled representatives in which he quoted Fr Joseph Archambault (Rochester, 1914, p. 2), and this was followed up in the following April by an article in the *Men's Magazine*, repeating the Archbishop's view that CEMS should arrange retreats with the one aim of establishing an apostolate of the laity. In the silence, the author wrote, they would find a deep penitence which would lead to a heroic determination and resolution to spread the Kingdom of Christ. To achieve this, more retreat houses should be built or adapted for the purpose, situated out in the country but near to a town, and designed to allow every man to have his own room rather than a cubicle. They would also require conductors who had been especially trained in these new methods. A committee to arrange such retreats was formed, which arranged 13 retreats in various parts of the country in 1914, including two for its own members, but its work was brought to an end soon after the war started. Fourteen retreats were held however in 1915 (*Men's Magazine* April 1914, pp. 22-25; April 1915, p. 24.)

In 1913, two Lancashire curates, Robert E Schofield and R. F. Hurst, arranged a full three day retreat for the 'plain' man, which was held at Arneside on Morecambe Bay. Sixteen men attended, and as a result a 'Committee for Laymen's retreats for the Dioceses of Manchester, Liverpool and Chester' was established which continued to organise two retreats a year for the next three years. It was backed by the three bishops and several keen businessmen and was chaired by Colonel Hesketh, himself a business man of some substance. (*The Vision*, No. 23, pp. 5-8).

Similar arguments to those made by Plater were put forward in a report presented to the Bishop of Rochester by a group of churchmen led by a CEMS member, Major Arthur Bowker. In September of 1913 he and Fr Philip Bacon, curate of Wrotham in Kent where Bowker lived, had made a five day tour of the Belgian houses, as a result of which his committee recommended the

establishment of a Diocesan retreat house, to be managed by a committee of laymen and staffed, following the Continental model, by a small team of trained priests (Rochester, 1914, p. 5). The writers of the report argued that the methods then being used were ineffective; the spiritual state of many of the CEMS branches was far from satisfactory, Bible Classes, Study Circles, Men's Services and Quiet Days appealed to only a few men, whilst the effects of Parish Missions were too often only ephemeral. In a three-day retreat, a man could be brought face to face with his soul and God, and realise the need for the reform and regulation of his life according to the divine will, producing deeper and more lasting effects. The object of such retreats was to foster an apostolic spirit, leading the retreatants to influence and change an ever-widening circle of acquaintances who would eventually be led to make a retreat and become apostles in their turn (Rochester, 1914, p. 3).

In the Rochester Diocese, within a month of the presentation of Major Bowker's report, a first retreat for men of the Diocese was held at Haslemere, (*Men's Magazine*, 1902-1971, April 1915; Lampard, 1993, p. 13, 16).²³ In 1915, Major Bowker began to host retreats in his own home with a rather rigorous time-table, and in 1919 a Fellowship of Men Retreatants was formed in the Diocese with Fr. Andrew of the Society of Divine Compassion as its leader. Fellowship members promised to go on retreat at least once a year (SRC Archives CB/RP). Rochester Diocese opened its own house, intended to be used primarily for men, in 1920 at 'Oakhurst' Erith. All this is evidence that the Roman Catholic Charles Plater had stimulated an increase in the provision of retreats for men in the Church of England.

2. The beginnings of the Association for Promoting Retreats

The reading of Plater's book inspired a group of ladies and clergy to found the Association for Short Retreats in November 1913, an organisation which was four years later renamed 'The Association for Promoting Retreats' (APR) and

²³ This venue was described by Fr Algy SSF in 1926 as the most beautiful and by far the most primitive Retreat House in England (Denis, 1964, p. 75). In 1941 it became the first home of the St Julian's Community established by Florence Allshorn. She then described it as being a wooden house built on a very steep hillside so that the entrance was upstairs, with five bedrooms, five cells outside, and half a cottage – an inconvenient house with superb surroundings (Oldham, 1951, p. 80).

which is still active today. It was brought to birth in the drawing rooms of Bloomsbury with the initial purpose of running retreats for working women from a Friday evening through to a Monday morning. Members of the first committee, which consisted of Anglo-Catholic priests and ladies of leisure, were able to make loans totalling £1,000. It also attracted the patronage of such people as Lord Halifax and Lady Henry Somerset, who offered a gift of hot-water geysers and the loan of a house keeper. They purchased a suitable house set in over an acre of land in Chiswick which they named St Ursula's, which had 20 bedrooms, a chapel and a dining room (Lampard, 1993, p. 16).

The first retreats arranged at this new venue were held in August 1914 just as war broke out, although a retreat for factory girls was cancelled because the intended retreatants had been thrown out of work by the war, and so could no longer afford to come (Lampard, 1993, p. 17). There was at that time some talk amongst committee members of turning the house into a hospital, but the view prevailed that the war made opportunities for silent reflection even more important than they had been before. The organising committee had a great belief in the innate power of a full retreat, and saw no necessity to make it more accessible by making it less demanding. Indeed, one munitions worker was reported as saying 'Everyone thinks that we want dancing; no-one thinks that we girls have souls' (Lampard, 1993, p. 14).²⁴

APR was soon to expand its role. Writing to members of the General Committee in April 1916, Mrs Helen Wrightson said that it might be, and in the minds of those who started it was meant to be, a means of 'popularising the idea of retreat, urging people to go on retreat' and be 'a central place of information with regard to retreats.' She also suggested having a travelling secretary and the value of parochial retreats, all ideas which were to be taken up in the 1920's

²⁴ APR was not the only body experimenting with retreats for working girls during this period. At the large hospitable All Saints Mission House in Wigan, Sister Sybil of the Wantage sisters ran two non-residential retreats for working women and girls each year, with attendances of about 50 – 70 people. They began with an introductory talk on the Saturday evening, and then the following morning the retreatants came in their Sunday best for Mass, followed by three addresses, much hymn singing and one intercession service at which the girls offered their own requests. There were three substantial meals, the last one being a typical north-country hot pot supper. On the Monday there was a half day retreat for their mothers, beginning in the late morning after they had finished their work, with a more concentrated time-table. There were often 90 present (The Community of St. Mary the Virgin, 1946, p. 87).

(Thompson, 1983, p. 339; Lampard, 1993, p. 23). Indeed, this was later on to be the main function of APR.

3. The Provision of Retreat Houses

St Ursula's was the first of a number of houses to be established under Plater's influence. Schofield's committee found a suitable building at Watermillock, just five minutes' walk away from one of the Bolton tram termini. However nothing was to come of this project until 1919, in part because for a time Manchester and Liverpool were both planning to open their own establishments, plans which were not successful (*Vision*, August 1925, pp. 5-8). By this time, another house was already up and running in the Coventry diocese and is a striking example of the effect which this Jesuit had on people.

In 1917, there was ferment in the factories of Coventry, production of munitions was reduced, and there were rumours of strikes. A meeting was called of 35 clergymen and local labour leaders, together with a representative from the front line and an expert on social questions. Some of those present had read Plater and, with the support of the designated first bishop of the diocese of Coventry, they backed the diocesan missionary, the Revd Alan Simpson, in his determination to establish a retreat house, presumably believing that this provision would in the end help to change the attitude of the workers. Simpson personally purchased a suitable property in Rugby and opened it in the following year as the first retreat house wholly designed for parish retreats (*Vision*, 1925, pp. 6, 7). He reported in a letter to the *Guardian* that during the first seven months of its operation, 300 people, mostly of the "artisan class" of Coventry, had attended 22 retreats, whilst a further 100 had come for conferences or private retreats (*Guardian*, Oct. 10th 1918, p. 770). The following week, he gave an account of a retreat for beginners attended by girls living in "munitions colonies" in Coventry, to whom God had revealed himself in the "seclusion and holy stillness". The girls had said that being in retreat was not strange, but that they felt at home, and that the silence was a wonderful experience and a relief from all the noise (*Guardian*, Oct. 17th 1918, p. 812).

4. The Case for Retreats.

The case for retreats was made at some length in a collection of articles edited by the Revd Robert Schofield and published in 1915. It was issued in the name of Dr A. W. Robinson who was already a familiar figure in many sections of the church because of his work as an evangelist, retreat giver and expositor. Entitled *Retreats, their Value, Organisation and Growth*, the volume showed Fr Plater's influence in a number of ways. Firstly, it included a chapter written by the Jesuit Fr E. H. Buckland, who was in charge of Oakland Hall, giving an update on the progress of retreats for working men. He reported that already 3,000 men had been on retreat at that house, and that there had been many conversions from sin whilst others had moved on from being good to becoming exemplary Christians. All had come closer to God and had experienced sins forgiven and troubles lightened, whilst growing in charity and in the power to influence others. As well as a new house at Isleworth, others had been established in Glasgow and Gateshead. There was also a contribution from Lunn, in which he reported on the, at that time limited, Methodist experience.

Secondly, the link between retreats and spreading the gospel was emphasised. Three of the authors had a particular concern for evangelism, including Dr Robinson himself and the high churchman Canon Peter Green, well known as a successful parish priest in Leeds and an expert on Parish Missions. The third contributor was Canon C. C. Bell, Canon Missioner at York, the author of a number of books on evangelism, who was now experimenting with retreats. Further, two of the authors, Bishop Watts-Ditchfield of Chelmsford, who had been chairman of the CEMS Retreats committee, and the Revd Guy Warman, Principal of St Aidan's College, Birkenhead, were prominent Evangelicals, although perhaps on the more liberal side of that party.

A third link with Plater's book was that Canon Bell stressed the need for dedicated retreat houses, ideally situated in the country but within easy reach of a railway station. Following the Continental model, the importance of a strong committee was recognised which would keep a register of potential retreatants and personally invite them to come (Robinson, 1915). In all these ways, the links between *Retreats for the People* and Schofield's book may be made.

5. Diocesan Retreat Houses.

Perhaps the most significant response to Plater's ideas was contained in a report on Evangelism issued in 1918, as the war was coming to an end. It was one of five reports commissioned in the aftermath of the National Mission of Repentance and Hope which had been held in 1916, its organisers employing retreats as part of the preparation of both clergy and people for their part in it. For example, Davidson called together all his diocesan clergy at Canterbury Cathedral for most of two days and a night, giving three solemn addresses. Afterwards, the men went back to their work 'with a deeper inspiration, a clearer hope, a firmer and less faltering tread.' This was probably for many their first experience of anything like a retreat since they had been ordained as priests (Bell, 1935, pp. 771, 773). As already mentioned, Charles Gore, by now Bishop of Oxford, despite his misgivings about the wisdom of the whole enterprise, summoned all the clergy of the diocese into retreat. He secured for the purpose the loan of four great school buildings, at Wellington, Radley, Bradfield and Wycombe Abbey, where four large retreats were held simultaneously (Prestige, 1935, p. 383; Wilkinson, 1978, p. 88). Similar but smaller events were held in every diocese, all helping to raise the profile of retreats.

The National Mission was assessed by most people not to have been a success, the Chelmsford Diocesan Chronicle reporting that there were few signs, if any, that the outsider had been reached (The English Church Review Vol. VIII 1917 p. 4). In response to this failure, five Commissions of Enquiry were set up by the Archbishops to advise them on the post-war development of the Church, the commissions' reports being published during the last months of the war and their recommendations being all very conservative (Mission, 1918, p. 42). Alan Wilkinson regards the report on Evangelism to be a particular failure, but it did however make a recommendation which had far reaching results (Wilkinson, 1978, p. 88).

The report's authors pointed to the way in which over the previous seventy years retreats had already helped to raise the standards of the parish clergy, stating:

the yearly [ministerial] retreat is a most salutary rule of the priestly life. Well used it goes far to make the minister a man of God. Nothing could therefore be more vital to the evangelism of [this land].

Therefore such retreats should be further encouraged (Mission, 1918, p. 42). Similarly, the commission recommended that retreats for the laity should be developed echoing Plater in these words:

it ought not to be impossible to extend the use of retreat to men and women of all classes. The experience of the Roman Catholic Church in Belgium in the years preceding the war is a striking evidence of the attractiveness, even to those to whom it is an entirely new experience, of the atmosphere of the spiritual world which the common silence and fellowship of retreats bring. We doubt whether there exists any spiritual method more likely to produce the deepest penitence and conversion than the method of retreat aimed directly at leading men to consciousness of God (Mission, 1918, p. 44).

As retreats for both clergy and laity could only be extended if there were more facilities available for them, the Committee made this key recommendation:

each diocese should have a Retreat house, which could be used not only by the clergy, but also by the laity, where it might be possible for any men or women who desired to spend a day or more apart (Mission, 1918, p. 20).

This recommendation was acted upon quickly, and as is outlined in a later section of this chapter, retreat houses, in accordance with the practice of the Roman church, were to be established in many parts of the country over the following years.

6. Formation of the Society of Retreat Conductors

There was one further significant initiative which can be directly attributed to the influence of Plater's work, which was the formation of the Society of Retreat Conductors (SRC) in 1924 to provide retreat conductors who specialised in this ministry, to train retreat conductors, to organise Ignatian retreats, especially for men, and to administer retreat houses of a high standard. Consideration of this is postponed however to the end of the chapter, as it sums up many of the developments in the history of retreats during this period.

All of these developments helped to encourage and facilitate the rapid expansion of the practice of retreat in the Church of England in the following

decade or more. But Plater's book with its emphasis on Roman Catholic practice at the time was not the only stimulus to such growth, and so we now review some of the other factors which were also at work.

C. Factors encouraging the Expansion of the Practice of Retreat

At least three further factors have been suggested as causes of the growth of the retreat movement after the Great War, namely a wide-spread interest in mysticism, a desire for quiet after the noise of conflict and, perhaps most important of all, the broad acceptance at long last of the heirs of the Oxford Movement within the established church. It is with this last development that we begin.

Growth of Anglo-Catholicism. Adrian Hastings says that the 1920's can be seen as the start of Anglo-Catholicism's golden age. This he suggests was because bishops of significant personal and intellectual stature such as Gore, Lang, Frere, and Garbett, all celibate Anglo-Catholics, were gently moving the Church of England in a more Catholic direction in devotional practice, worship and teaching. Additionally, the younger thinkers who contributed to the publication of *Essays Catholic and Critical* in 1925 were to bring to the Church of England a theology which, whilst modifying the crudities of the attitudes of earlier Anglo-Catholics and bringing a more critical approach to scripture and tradition, still affirmed the reality of the supernatural which their forbears had defended and which was being rejected by Modernists of that time (Hastings, 2005, pp. 195, 197, 234). It has also been recognised that the old suspicions of Anglo-Catholic clergy had been broken down by the great spiritual qualities and leadership shown by many of them during the First World War, which had won the affection and respect of the men at the front and of people at home. In the parish situation they were often hard working and effective priests greatly loved by their parishioners, even those who distrusted their Roman ways (Pickering, 1989, p. 47).

The growth of the movement is illustrated by the ever-rising numbers of those who registered to attend the meetings of the great Anglo-Catholic

Congresses which were such a feature at this time, from 13,000 in 1920 to 70,000 in 1933 (Pickering, 1989). At the 1920 Congress an important paper on retreats was given which affirmed their priority, encouraging the Congress committee to financially support the work of both APR and SRC from 1923 onwards (Briscoe, 1920; Lampard, 1993, p. 25). As we saw in the previous chapter, it was the members of the Anglo-Catholic wing of the church who had introduced the practice of retreat into the Church of England and it was from them that most of the promoters, practitioners and participants continued to come. Thoroughly at home with many of the various forms of post-Tridentine worship, it was natural for them to use this powerful form of devotion which they saw as part of the package which they were borrowing from Roman Catholicism. It is not surprising then that the numbers of retreatants should be increasing at a time when the Anglo-Catholics were arguably moving into the ascendancy in the church.

Mysticism. Another possible factor in the growth of a practice which aimed to lead a person into a direct experience of the divine realities was that in the early years of the twentieth century there was a growing hunger for mystical experience both within the church and amongst spiritual seekers outside it. Writing for the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement in the early 1920's, Dean William Inge said:

The greatest change which has come upon religious thought in our time is the shifting of the centre of gravity from authority to experience...This means that what is called mystical religion fills a larger space in the religious life of the present than it did, for example, during the Deistic controversies of the eighteenth century...For mysticism means the immediate communion between God and the human soul (Inge, 1924, p. 3).

Inge had helped to foster this interest. The publication of his book *Christian Mysticism* in 1899 and his subsequent lectures on the subject did much to foster an awareness of the subject (Inge, 1899; 1923; 1959).

A second influential writer, Baron von Hugel, published his great two-volume work *The Mystical Element of Religion* in 1908, (Hugel, 1908), and a third author was Evelyn Underhill whose book on mysticism published in 1911, together with her more popular writings had aroused much interest and brought

her to public attention (Underhill, 1911; 1914).²⁵ This emphasis on mysticism continued into the twenties and beyond, with the publication of Dom Cuthbert Butler's *Western Mysticism*, of Evelyn Underhill's translations of the English Mystics and with Dom David Knowles's important study of them issued in 1928. It was also the age of great spiritual directors such as Dom John Chapman and von Hugel amongst the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans Fr. Andrew, Somerset Ward, Evelyn Underhill and later Gilbert Shaw (Hacking, 1988).

It was a sign of the priority being given to this subject that, speaking at the first Anglo-Catholic Congress, G. W. Hockley could point to 'the growth amongst us of the mystical side of the Christian experience,' and that on the same occasion, the future Bishop G. C. Rawlinson gave a paper on mediation and mysticism, affirming the reality of the mystic's experience of unity with God (Hockley, 1920; Rawlinson, 1920). Clearly an interest in mysticism was part of the spiritual environment in the early 1920's, and retreats had the potential to help meet the longing shared by many to experience God at first hand.²⁶

Quiet. A possible third factor encouraging the practice of retreat was the desire for silence after the noise and strain of the First World War. Plater and his close colleague C. C. Martindale had led a number of Roman Catholic retreats for the war-wounded and army cadets with some success (Plater and Martindale, 1919). Further, the Revd Mark Carpenter-Garnier, at that time a member of the APR executive, had written a letter to the press about the part retreat houses could play in the rehabilitation of young men returning from the front. This may have been part of the thinking which led to the appeal made by the vice-president of his Association in the *Guardian* newspaper in October 1918 for funds to establish a retreat house for men. Certainly, in 1919, the programme of the newly opened house at Pleshey included retreats for those who had been demobbed as well as for the blind (Harvey, 1920). Although this 'convalescence' factor is a likely possibility, I have no further evidence of how influential it was.

²⁵ A recent lecture given by Abbot Christopher Jamison of Worth Abbey has reminded me that this is also the age of William James' Gifford Lectures *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) (Retreat Association Conference, Swanwick, May 14th 2008).

²⁶ Underhill had herself been brought to an acceptance of the Christian faith when making a retreat at a Roman Catholic Convent of Perpetual Adoration in 1907, and, after quietly becoming a practising Anglican in 1921, was to become perhaps the foremost retreat leader of her generation (Underhill, 1994, pp. 13, 24, 28).

We can conclude therefore that although the work of Charles Plater was very influential in encouraging the promotion of retreats in the Church of England in the twenties and thirties, there were other causes at work. An interest in mysticism in current society, the desire for quiet and above all the growth of Anglo-Catholicism were all factors which encouraged its development.

Part 2 – 1920 – 1940

D. The Growth of the Practice of Retreat

In the Roman Catholic church, dedicated retreat houses were an important part of the package allowing people to experience periods of quiet. In the Church of England, they were few and far between. Before 1920, some retreats had been hosted in centres such as Helmsley, St Deiniol's Library at Harwarden, and the Clergy House of Rest at West Malvern. Others had taken place through the kindness of private individuals who made their large homes available, as at Maxstoke Castle in Warwickshire, and Oakenrough at Haselmer (Trevelyan, 1916, back cover). In the Chester Diocese, Canon and Mrs Torr frequently welcomed retreatants, mainly clergy, to their home at Carlett Park. They had room for 20 retreatants. In that diocese, retreats were also hosted at Manley Hall, Helsby, by Canon and Mrs Stephen Gladstone, and at Somerfield Park, Congelton (Hughes, 1975, p. 27). No doubt there were similar arrangements in other dioceses. As far as facilities for lay retreats were concerned, there were Trevelyan's House at Beaconsfield in 1911, APR's at Hendon, St Mary's House IOW for private retreats run by Miss G. T. Mallet, and Simpson's House at Rugby (Simpson, 1927b, p. 21).

Now the pace of the development of such facilities accelerated. Schofield's own project, Watermillock, which had been used as a hospital for casualties during the war, was opened in the summer of 1919, the premises being rented by the committee, who took over all the existing furnishings. Robert Schofield and his wife were in charge, and the house ran successfully for many years regularly attracting over a thousand visitors a year, until it suddenly closed for financial reasons in 1935 (*Vision* No. 63, July 1935). Later in 1919, Bishop Watts Ditchfield encouraged his diocesan missionary, the Revd. H. Monks, to take over

a convent in the picture-postcard village of Pleshey within his diocese of Chelmsford. This belonged to a contemplative order of nuns known as ‘The Servants of Christ’. Built by them in 1909 in the Arts and Crafts style and situated in what was then the Diocese of St Albans, they were sadly vacating it because, as an Evangelical, Bishop Ditchfield would not allow them to reserve the Blessed Sacrament. It had already been used for some retreats hosted by the nuns, and they offered to lend it to the Diocese of Chelmsford for four years:

to be a home of peace, joy, rest, prayer, fellowship and hospitality, so that those who come in and out of it may find refreshment of body, soul and spirit, and those who serve in the House may minister to those who come ‘as to the Lord.’

The Chelmsford Diocesan Mission Society was able to buy the property from them in 1927 (Harvey, 1920).

During the following years, it seemed as if the vision of a house in every diocese, inspired by Plater, would indeed come to fruition fairly quickly. In 1920, the Birmingham diocese rented Coleshill Park in the countryside to the north of the city to be used as a retreat centre, work which came abruptly to an end five-and-a-half years later when the property was acquired by the Corporation of Birmingham. ‘Oakhurst’, in Erith, Kent, which had been identified by Major Bowker’s committee as a possible retreat house back in 1914, was opened in 1920 to serve the Rochester Diocese and South London. The same year also saw the opening of Barlaston Hall, Stoke on Trent, leased for fifteen years by the Rev. T. L. Murray, the Diocesan Missioner for Lichfield (*Vision*, Aug. 1921, p. 9; Feb. 1921, p. 20). Set in 25-30 acres of ground, it had several large bedrooms which were converted into 25 cubicles.²⁷ This work was endorsed by the Lichfield Diocesan Conference which passed a resolution in 1922 drawing attention to the evangelistic influence of retreats (*CofEYB*, 1923, p. 99). Again in 1920 came the opening by APR of St George’s House for men, which was quickly in financial trouble because it was difficult to encourage men to come into silence.

²⁷ Schofield advised that such division could be done with plasterboard or floorboards, or with ‘dyed Bolton sheeting’ hanging from rails, the latter being preferable as it made cleaning easier – but, I suggest, reduced privacy (Schofield, 1927, pp. 183-184). Such adaptations went against the ideals expressed by the Archbishop of York in 1914 which looked for purpose-built houses.

The opening of new houses continued rapidly. In 1923, Norwich opened a Diocesan House at Welbourne, developing work which had been going on for many years on an ad hoc basis at Blakeney (*CofEY*, 1923, p. 98; *Vision*, Aug. 1923, p. 9). In that year, work began at St Mary's Abbey Leiston to provide accommodation for 22 retreatants. The following year Oakhurst, Ambergate, was rented to serve the dioceses of Southwell and Derby, and All Saints House in Clevedon, Somerset, opened using the parish church as its chapel to serve Bath and Wells (*Vision*, May 1924, p. 4; Nov. 1924, pp. 7, 8). Also in 1924, through the enthusiasm of Bishop (later Archbishop) William Temple, the Diocese of Manchester acquired Whalley Abbey, although this was not opened till some years afterwards as it quickly passed into the hands of the newly formed Diocese of Blackburn and the abbey ruins needed extensive work on them before they could be used residentially (*Vision*, May 1924, p. 6).

So by 1925, including those owned by religious communities, 60 Anglican retreat houses were in use, a few long established, but many opened since 1918. These included those run by dioceses or trusts in Birmingham, Canterbury, Chester, Chichester, Essex, Exeter, Kent, Lancashire, Lichfield, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Yorkshire, Southwark and London. Not all of these survived for very long, but the impetus for growth was there.

Houses continued to be opened, often through the generosity of individual lay people. These included West Ogwell, an old manor house on edge of Dartmoor, which was given in 1925 to the diocese of Exeter by General and Mrs Kelly (*Vision*, Oct 1925); Verulam House 1928, (St Albans); Abbey House Glastonbury, opened in 1932 as house of 'Retreat, Study and Prayer' (Bath and Wells) (*Vision*, July, 1932); 'Cothill' Stratton Nr Bude, placed at the disposal of the Diocese of Truro by its owner in 1933 (*Vision*, July 1933); Farnham Castle, (Guilford), opened 1934; St Anne's, Pitville Circus, Cheltenham (Gloucester) 1935, and Shallowford House, given to the diocese of Lichfield to replace Barleston in 1938.

Some were staffed by religious. The York Diocesan Retreat House at Hessle, outside Hull, given by the Dykes family and opened 1930, was in the care of the Horbury Sisters until 1934. It was then taken over by the Order of the

Holy Paraclete, based at Whitby, who remained there until its closure in 1949, when they moved to the new diocesan house at Wydale Hall (Barker, 2000, p. 16).

In the Chester diocese, the initiative was taken by three leaders, the Bishop, Henry Paget, the Dean, Frank Bennett, who were both men with a strong pastoral concern, and Herbert Eck, the Canon Residentiary and a noted ascetic, retreat giver and spiritual director. The Dean saw the house as part of his vision for developing the work of the Cathedral as the headquarters of the Diocese, and the house was established in one of the properties in the Close. When the house was opened on Dec. 22nd 1925 they secured the services of Sister Blanche Margaret of the Community of St Peter, Horbury, a group of nuns who had been involved in retreat work since the early years of the movement. She brought to the house a great sense of humour, practical skills and the ability to enthuse others. This house always belonged to a trust rather than the diocese, and was used perhaps more by the neighbouring dioceses of Liverpool and St Asaph and various national organisations rather than by the Chester diocese itself.

Few of the diocesan houses were used exclusively for retreats and when the house at Chester opened in 1925, the bishop had a four-fold vision for it. He envisaged the house first and foremost as a place which would offer quiet times and retreats to those who wanted to think, learn, pray and try to draw nearer to God. He also saw it being the venue for the Embertide ordination retreats, and for gatherings of clergy called together by him for a few days of devotion, study and fellowship. However it would also be used as *the* place for conferences arranged by the Messengers, Teachers, Guiders, Scout-Masters, Mothers Union, CLB, GFS, CEMS and other organisations. Finally, it would serve as a Hostel where, at such times as that of the Diocesan conference, some of the members could find pleasant accommodation (Hughes, 1975, pp. 21-25, 28, 30).

Alan Simpson wrote in 1927 that a retreat was the cure of spiritual apathy and unreality, that it dealt with the causes of spiritual failure, and so 'formal Churchmanship can hardly survive a well-kept retreat'. He continued:

If we could provide Retreat Houses....at least on the scale of one for each of our great towns in England, in two generations we should see a Church preserved in vision and power – and that would be a long way towards

seeing a nation with a changing conception of the need and the meaning of the Christian Faith (Simpson, 1927b, p. 28).

Alan Simpson's optimistic hope was never fulfilled.

Some idea of the rate of growth is given by the fact that there were 34 houses in 1925, 14 Diocesan and 20 belonging to religious communities, whilst ten years later the number was 24 and 30 respectively, making a total of 54 houses, a rise of 50%. There were 185 retreats in 1920, of which 44 were for priests, 24 for men, 116 for women and one was mixed. By 1934 this had increased to 470 retreats, of which 84 were for priests, 45 for laymen, 285 for women, 20 mixed and 36 for young people, an increase of over 100% (CofEYBs; APR Retreat lists). In 1925, Alan Simpson estimated that the total attendance was 780 clergy, 1448 men and boys and 5603 women and girls. In addition those making private retreats numbered 115 clergy, 35 laymen and 192 women, making a total for the year of 8173 (Simpson, 1927a, pp. 15, 21). Such growth is most encouraging.

E. Some Retreat Conductors

In the Roman Catholic Church, the leaders of retreats were priests drawn almost exclusively from the religious orders, many of whom had received special training for this work. As we saw in the previous chapter, when the practice of retreat was adopted within the Church of England, no communities for men were in existence, and so the first Anglican retreats were led by secular clergy. With the formation of the Society of St John the Evangelist and later of the Community of the Resurrection, for whom retreat work was an essential part of their ministry, a mixed economy evolved. The possibility of using lay people in this role was discussed at an APR conference in 1929, which came to the conclusion that even though a layman might have the necessary charismatic gifts and theological training, a priest would still be necessary for giving 'authoritative counsel and for administering the sacraments.' The possibility of female leadership was firmly rejected, because they could not have the necessary authority. 'A mother superior might give her nuns spiritual addresses, but could she give a retreat as it is commonly understood?' (Lampard, 1993). So in the Anglican retreat tradition, conductors were always male and in priestly orders,

but might be religious or secular, and this continued, with one notable exception whom we will consider later, to be the situation right up to 1960.

I propose to consider religious and secular conductors separately, as they received different training and approached this ministry from different situations.

1. Religious as Retreat Conductors

The members of SSJE and CR were joined in the early years of the twentieth century by men of the Society of the Sacred Mission based at Kelham, by Benedictine monks who from 1926 onwards had their mother house at Nashdom, and by the members of the gradually evolving Franciscan brotherhoods. All of these communities were to provide conductors over the years, and indeed many of the best loved of retreat leaders were professed religious.²⁸ Their spiritual formation, with its deep grounding in ascetical theology and in the disciplined life of silence, worship and prayer, and their experience of being regular retreatants, gave them the best possible grounding for the retreat ministry, although not all of them were gifted in this way.

Among the best known of them was Henry Ernest Hardy, better known as Fr Andrew (1869-1946). A poet and an artist, he was a founder member in 1894 of the Society of Divine Compassion, which worked for sixty years or more at Plaistow in East London. He gave an annual retreat at Pleshey, a house with which he is especially associated. He wrote a number of books, and a volume of his retreat addresses was published after his death from shorthand made by one of his retreatants (Father Andrew, 1949). They reveal a knowledge of the world in which people lived and of the church circumstances in which they had to fit, such as the Church of South India. His style was informal, pastoral and personal, dealing with matters of current concern, far from the Ignatian model. But far more important than his words was his personality. This is part of a description of him by a retreatant:

To be in retreat with him was an unforgettable experience. Father X gives good addresses and is a good man, but when he leaves the chapel he is gone. But with Father Andrew you feel his presence whether he is actually in the chapel or not (Anstey, 1959, p. 65).

²⁸ For the early histories of SSM and of Nashdom see Anson 1964 pp 139-149 and 183-194. For an account of the development of the Franciscan communities within the Church of England see Father Denis, 1964; Moorman, 1974, chapter 10.

Of another well known conductor, Fr E. K. Talbot, Superior of the Community of the Resurrection, we also have a description given by one of his retreatants. She said that when he gave his addresses, his face shone with a light of supernatural joy and goodness:

It was his sovereignty of soul, together with the rare beauty of his diction and wide range of thought, which made his addresses so memorable...Large heartedness and long heartedness – magnanimity and patience – were virtues on which he liked to dwell, and he truly practiced them in his dealing with souls (Anstey, 1959, p. 65).

Like Evelyn Underhill, he was greatly influenced by Baron von Hugel, and was also closely linked with Pleshey. Indeed, his published addresses, again taken form short-hand notes, were edited by Lucy Menzies, warden there for ten years. They reveal an informal style, speaking to his retreatants simply and directly, and giving practical advice on their devotional and daily lives, echoing the spirituality of St Francis de Sales who affirmed that God works through the ordinary things of life. There seems to be no great overarching scheme for each retreat but a revisiting of familiar but foundational themes. His approach to the whole exercise was Benedictine rather than Ignatian, telling his listeners that a retreat was like a holiday, a rest and a change of scene, but with not too much talk. Therefore ‘a retreat is a strange mixture of hard work and relaxation,’ practising a certain alertness and gathering up all our aims to a loving, worshipful attentiveness (Talbot, 1953, 19-21).

Although giving priority to the enclosed life, the Benedictines of Nashdom were called upon to lead retreats from time to time, as well as giving guidance to the many guests who came to make their private retreats (Anson, 1964, p. 191), but few, if any, of their retreat addresses seem to have been published. We have a book by one of their early members, Bede Frost, called *A Retreat for Layfolk*, but this seems to have been intended for private use rather than ever being presented to a group. It consists of thirteen elegantly crafted addresses, or conferences, on dogmatic and ascetical themes, technical in their language, laced with frequent quotations from the divines of the Western Church, including St T  resa and St John of the Cross, and showing little consciousness of the issues of daily life.

The volume ends with outlines of 25 meditations on passages of scripture for personal use. He explains that to come into retreat is to come into the presence of God, to enter into the world of supernatural reality and activity, to enter into the silence of God, and to answer a call of God to the individual's soul. This quotation gives a flavour of his approach:

The Father uttered one Word: that Word is His Son; and He utters Him for ever in an eternal silence and in silence must the soul hear. That which we most require for our spiritual growth is the silence of the desire and of the tongue before God, Who is so high...the language He most listens to is that of silent love (Frost, 1931, p. 5).

2. Secular Clergy

Because of the expansion of the retreat movement in the early 1920's, there was an urgent need for more conductors, and so secular clergy were encouraged to take up this ministry. Such men did not however have the long spiritual formation of the religious, and usually their knowledge of ascetical theology was limited, and so the question arose of how much training was needed, and how it was to be given. In the pages of early editions of *Vision* two contrary views were put forward. In the issue of May 1921, it was suggested that comparatively little training was needed for conducting weekend retreats for beginners. Such conductors needed neither rare gifts of profound theology nor great preaching skills, but a firm grip on the essentials of faith and practice, a simple spiritual outlook, and a sympathetic attitude towards retreatants of little experience. The writer continued 'We believe that many priests who possibly cut no great figure in the pulpit possess these qualities.' (*Vision*, May 1921, p. 5).

A contrary view was put forward the following year. An anonymous contributor argued that if work amongst men was to develop, there was a need for the standardisation of practice so that the potential retreatants knew what they were coming to, and so the conductors needed to be adequately trained and to specialise in the work (*Vision*, Aug. 1922, pp. 5, 6). This view was supported by the Society of Retreat Conductors, and, as we will see towards the end of this chapter, was the main reason for its formation. In 1935, their Superior, Fr F. H. Mather, put forward the following elements of the training which a conductor should receive. Firstly, he needed to have experience of being a retreatant. Secondly, he needed to read and study widely, and to become familiar with the

Spiritual Exercises and with the Jesuit Directory which accompanies them. Thirdly, he needed training in one-to-one spiritual direction, and next, he must be learned in the art of mental prayer as well as having frequent discussions with his fellow conductors. Finally, he should begin by guiding private retreatants, and when he progressed to working with group retreats he should work at first with someone who was experienced (*Vision*, July 1935, p. 7). This was indeed an ideal, but in practice such intensive training could only be made available to a few. It was only in the 1980's that anything approaching this was generally offered.

Ignatian training was available, often given by religious but intended for secular priests. Fr W. H. Longridge SSJE led a course in Lent 1918 at St Edward's House Westminster, which was published in successive issues of *The English Church Review*, and a course was offered in 1920 by the secular Fr Bacon in All Saints, Margaret Street. Longridge offered continuous help with the books he published, and especially his great commentary published in 1919 which seems very out of date to readers now, but which, when it was published, gave its readers what was the latest thinking on the *Exercises* and the Directory which accompanies it. Again, his orders for retreats seem far too rigid for modern taste but if applied with imagination would enable participants to enter in to the full benefits of Ignatian retreat (Longridge, 1918; 1919; 1926; 1930).

In 1926 Fr. Douglas Cooper, himself a parish priest, issued a short commentary on the Exercises for the sake of 'these new Retreat Conductors [who] have been drawn, (for the most part) from the ranks of the secular clergy, and most of [whom] are busy Parish Priests' (Cooper, 1926). He gives his readers some acquaintance with Ignatius' text, but offers little help in appreciating what we nowadays refer to as the dynamics of the *Exercises*, of why the Saint arranged the material as he did. A further introduction to the Ignatian method was offered by Hubert Box in 1939. He says that his book was not intended as a replacement for the commentaries upon the work by Longridge and by Roman Catholic authors, but as a stepping stone to them. He had not attempted, as he puts it, to 'Anglicize' the exercises, but rather to present Ignatius exactly as it stood (Box, 1939, p. ix). He usefully gathers together the saint's

teaching on prayer and discernment which are dispersed throughout the exercises, but gives little commentary on the exercises or guidance on how the director is to use them.

The Ignatian pattern was not adopted however by a large number of secular clergy who were engaged in making it possible for people to go on retreat. These include Robert Schofield who was engaged in running a retreat house at this time. In the light of his experience as retreat leader and retreat house warden, he edited a second collection of papers on various aspects of retreat work which came out in 1927, many of which gave good practical advice (Schofield, 1927). In the same year, Alan Simpson, who had dealt with the history of the Anglican retreat movement in his contribution to Schofield's volume, published *The Principles and Practice of Retreats* (Simpson, 1927a, pp. 3, 67). He argued that the form of retreat being introduced was 'the embodiment of certain elements of the spiritual life that always have been, and always will be, necessary for the realisation of God by the human soul.' A retreat was a special visit which one paid to God in order to know him better, and the job of the conductor was to 'evoke the spiritual capacities of the retreatants' and to assist and guide them in the transactions that take place between themselves and God. He also included sample programmes for a three-day retreat, and for a short weekend retreat for beginners. Later he wrote a booklet entitled *Retreats for Beginners*, which was published by APR in 1931 specifically to give guidance to parish clergy called upon to lead short weekend introductory retreats (Simpson, 1931).

A third priest was James Wareham. In August 1924 the APR received a grant of £500 per annum from the Committee of the London Congress to appoint a general secretary, and Wareham was appointed to the post. In the end he stayed for nine years, spending the time leading retreats, running training courses and generally promoting the cause (*Vision*, 1920-1990, Nov. 1924, p. 2; Jan. 1934, p. 4). He also wrote a number of short books on Christian behaviour, which work continued when he went back into parish life. He was joined from 1928 to 1931 by Gilbert Shaw (1886-1967) who for that time had a remarkable ministry in spiritual direction which continued afterwards and was also experienced in the occult, the psychic and exorcism. His retreat ministry continued, after 1945 being

mainly confined to priests and religious and being chaplain to the Servants of the Love of God (Hacking, 1988, pp. 37, 69). They were succeeded in 1935 by Revd Miles Sargent, although this appointment didn't last for long as the London Congress was no longer financially independent and could no longer give a grant towards his stipend (*Vision*, July 1935, p. 4). Sargent, who acted as chaplain at various boys' schools and developed retreats amongst them, continued to be of assistance to APR for many years. By January 1951 he was sub-warden of CSMV, dying in 1958 when chaplain with special responsibility for Clergy Schools of Prayer in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich (Wilson, 2007).

The balance between the ministries of secular and religious priests is reflected in a list of conductors, found in the archives of Pleshey Retreat house, which was prepared apparently in 1927 by Mrs Harvey during her time as warden. It includes the religious Fr E. K. Talbot and many of the members of SSJE. Also noted are the secular clergy Alan Simpson, Canon Underhill, who was warden of Liddon House, the Rev. E. Elwin of Wycliffe Hall, presumably an Evangelical, Revd Frank Wyatt of SRC and twenty or more local clergy whom she recognised as having gifts in this direction (Harvey, 1927). There is a further name, the one exception at this time to the rule that conductors must be male and priests, either religious or secular. It is that of Mrs Stuart-Moore, who when engaged in this work used her maiden name, Evelyn Underhill.

3. Evelyn Underhill

Evelyn Underhill was the product of the new recognition of the place of women within society which slowly emerged in Victorian times, being an alumna of the 'Ladies' department at King's College, London, which opened in 1893. There she had studied history and languages - a good preparation for her work on the mystics. Whilst fulfilling very ably her social duties as the wife of a leading barrister, she found the freedom to tour the country addressing meetings and leading retreats. It was this latter work, along with her work as a spiritual director, which she prized the most. She regarded the retreats as being a dedicated time, not apart from but part of the normal spiritual life, and the purpose of a retreat was rest and recreation, renewal, rebirth, and the recovery of

quality and depth (Armstrong, 1975, p. 266). The first retreat which she led was at Pleshey in 1925 for members of the Time and Talents Settlement, a group with which she had made her own retreat there a year or so earlier. As her ministry developed she regularly took eight retreats a year, doing a round of the houses at Pleshey, Little Compton, Watermillock, Moreton, St Leonards, Leiston Abbey, Glastonbury and Canterbury.

In one way her ministry was limited because her audience was mainly women of the same social group as herself, who were not necessarily intellectual but ladies of deep faith. Her retreat addresses therefore were not analytical but were based upon an overarching metaphor or some familiar prayer or statement, such as the creed or the Eucharist. Many of them were later published with, it would appear, very little editing. She was also concerned about the practical things, going to the trouble of personally allocating the rooms to the individual retreatants, posting around scriptural quotes and pictures, choosing the hymns for the pianist, and getting her friends to pray for those in retreat. She would herself act as sacristan for the chaplain and lead devotions at midday in the form of guided meditations on scriptural passages (Armstrong, 1975, pp. 265, 266; Greene, 1991, pp. 93, 100).

Her close friend Lucy Menzies, who was, at Underhill's insistence, warden of Pleshey for ten years, writes that Evelyn left there a lasting heritage in the spiritual atmosphere and the way of life which she established. She was unsparing in her retreat work, and demanded absolute silence (Cropper, 1958, p. xvii). Christopher Armstrong writes that many who heard her retreats recall the spell which she was able to cast through her combination of personal charm, skill with words and calming serenity, whilst Dana Green says that her zest, humour and caring gave a lightness to the retreats which otherwise might have been long-faced affairs (Armstrong, 1975, p. xii; Greene, 1991, p. 100). Green also says that she brought to her retreats her awareness of God which flowed out of her gender – 'her way of knowing was through attachment, it was relational, and mysticism for her was participation in the love of God' (Greene, 1991, p. 149).

Evelyn Underhill was unique in this ministry. Allowing a woman to lead a retreat was not part of the received Catholic tradition, and even within the

established church it was not until the 1960s that it became generally acceptable for both women and men to fulfil this role.

These then are some of the people who before the Second World War took retreats. Who were the retreatants?

F. Retreatants

What had so attracted the attention of Plater's Anglican readers was his enthusiastic description of artisans coming to make their retreats. The data does not exist upon which an analysis of the social and economic background of retreatants can be made, but the evidence available seems to point clearly to the fact that very few, if any, working men ever came to Anglican retreats. An anonymous writer in *Vision* in August 1922 reported that retreats in the form in which they were then being given did not appeal to the masses of men, but only to those who had already started on the spiritual life. It might have been different however if the conductors were properly trained and the men knew to what they were coming (pp. 5, 6). However, because of the social and cultural leap which was entailed, it was extremely unlikely that men from the working class would ever come on retreat, a fact that Fr Kelly of the Society of the Sacred Mission realised very early on.

Kelly saw three stages in the process of a person coming to God, the first being a sense of questioning as to the meaning of life, the second the realisation that the Christian faith was the answer, and the third the attaining of the communion of the soul with God. Preaching and missions were the way to get men from stage one to stage two, although the effect of missions was short lived. Perhaps retreats after the style of the conferences which the Student Christian Movement was at that time holding at Swanwick would be the answer here, provided that they were not too serious. However, he suggested, silence was necessary when moving to the third stage of seeking communion with God and so it was at this later stage that periods of withdrawal might be of value (*Vision*, May 1925, p. 12).

It has always been the case that fewer men came on retreat than women, a situation which had previously been exacerbated by the fact that, with a preponderance of women's orders offering hospitality to potential retreatants,

there were few places where laymen were welcome. However, when APR opened their retreat house specifically for men in April 1921, they still did not come; within a year around 47% of people attending retreats there were women, and by 1926 this had risen to 68%, the ladies being welcomed in order to make the place financially viable (Lampard, 1993, p. 30). As has already been mentioned, Alan Simpson estimated that in 1925, only 1448 men and boys made a retreat, as compared with 5603 women and girls. In 1937, SRC, which had been formed in 1924 with a special ministry to men, reported that it was difficult to achieve retreats for men as well as retreats longer than three days. In that year, SRC members had led retreats in various houses for only 39 laymen, as compared with 155 laywomen (*Vision*, Oct. 1937 p. 21).

Thus, by 1940, retreats were becoming a regular part of the devotional life of the Anglican Communion, with ladies coming far more than men. The movement depended upon the original impetus which had come from the Roman Catholic Church, but it had gone on for most of the time without reference being made to that fact in any of the literature produced in this period. The exception is mention of Fr Charles Plater, but even he is largely forgotten. The relationship was not to change for the period 1940 to 1962, to which we now turn.

Part 3 - 1940 – 1962

G. Retreat Houses after the Second World War

The Second World War nearly caused the death of the retreat movement. By the end of war, APR found that its headquarters had been severely damaged during the blitz, its membership was halved and its resources crippled so that it could no longer employ a full time organizing secretary, and its retreat house of St Ursula had been commandeered for military use (*Vision*, July 1953, p. xiv). Mark Carpenter-Garnier, the president of APR, recalled how houses had closed their doors nationally, with some being requisitioned and some being damaged by enemy action (*Vision*, July 1954, p. xii). Chester, which closed immediately upon the outbreak of war, became the home of St Christopher's College Blackheath from 1940 to 1945 (Hughes, 1975, p. 44). In contrast, Stacklands, the

home of SRC, opened for the first time to retreatants in 1940, and Pleshey, after an initial fall in numbers, remained at the pre-war levels all the way through the war (SRC Archives Box5/RR; Pleshey Visitors Book).

Some ten years after hostilities ceased it was observed that the movement had barely recovered from these devastating actions (*Vision*, July 1954, p. xii; July 1956, p. vi). However, the lists of forthcoming retreats published by APR seem to show that by then the movement was expanding significantly again, as the following table shows.

| Type of retreat | 1951 | 1958 |
|-----------------|------|------|
| Clergy | 68 | 56 |
| Laymen | 30 | 60 |
| Women | 140 | 176 |
| Mixed | 79 | 175 |
| Youth | 5 | 0 |
| Totals | 322 | 467 |

Source – APR Retreats Lists for 1951 and 1958

Assuming that the number of retreats organised reflects the number of people actually coming, it would seem that at the end of the eight year period, whilst slightly fewer clergy were making a retreat, many more lay people were coming, the most significant increase being in those attending mixed retreats as social mores changed. In 1963, Martin Thornton, who had served for a time on the APR Council, reported that lay people were attending at the rate of 40,000 a year – an increase on the total given in 1925 by Alan Simpson, but still only a small percentage of the lay membership of the church (Thornton, 1963, p. 5).

Things slowly returned to normal, and a clutch of new houses was established. The first of these was Holland House in Copthorne, Worcestershire, which was opened by a group of lay people in 1945 and then became the property of the Diocese from 1954 until 1962, when it was handed to a lay community, as it was costing the diocese too much money to run. Shepherds Dene Northumberland was acquired by the Newcastle diocese in 1948, followed by Whirlow Grange for Sheffield in 1953, Launde Abbey in 1957 for the Leicester diocese (after two years at Cole Orton Rectory under Revd G. L. Godfrey), St Gabriels, Westgate on Sea in 1958 (Canterbury), Ripon Diocesan

House at Barrowby also in 1958, Offchurch (Coventry) 1960, and Parcevall Hall (Bradford) in 1963 (*Vision*, various years).

It was not only the dioceses which were opening houses. With the establishment of the Welfare State, the religious communities who had been running homes for unmarried mothers and other social projects, found that this work was no longer required, and sometimes used the space which became available for retreat purposes. This was the case at Clewer, which opened a house for 24 retreatants in 1956, and also at Wantage.

However, it was not all expansion. Judging by the number of houses which disappeared from APR retreat lists and Church of England Year Books during this period, some 20 houses ceased to function in the 1950's and 60's, many community-owned but also including the Southwark Diocesan House at Carshalton, Farnham Castle, and St Anne's, Cheltenham. These were all pre-war foundations, and probably the buildings needed upgrading (*Vision*, various dates).

Not all of the growth can be attributed to the influence of developments within Roman Catholic practice, although Bishop Mark Carpenter-Garnier, who was intimately involved in the development of the practice of retreats throughout the period under review, wrote in 1954:

For my part I believe that a book published by a Jesuit, Fr Plater, entitled *Retreats for the People* and published in 1912, exercised a great influence. It told of remarkable results in France and Belgium, and also in this country, where week-end retreats were provided for workers in business and factories (*Vision*, July 1954, p. ix).

The growth in attendance coincided with a temporary upturn in the fortunes of the established church. Although the number of infant baptisms per thousand live births went down from 672 in 1950 to 554 in 1960, the number of Anglican confirmations per thousand people aged 15 went up from 279 in 1950 to 315 over the same ten year period. Communion and ordination figures were also rising at this time, and it has been estimated that the Church of England was welcoming towards fifteen thousand new adult members a year (Hastings, 2005, p. 444). Many of these confirmees were adult converts, some of them of considerable social standing, and the new ordinands were older men bringing

considerable experience. It seems as if the church, whilst continuing to lose touch with the wider community, was seeing an increase in the devotion of its established adherents.²⁹

This could be one of the results of the Billy Graham Campaign at Haringay Arena of 1954 which brought some church goers, not only of an Evangelical background, to deeper commitment. It might also show the influence of the 'Parish and People Movement,' launched in 1949, which was helping parishes to 'escape from the dignified rigidities of matins and evensong' to a freer, 'more participatory, more sacramental and more Catholic' form of worship. However, Hastings sees such movements as the result rather than the cause of a deeper revival, which he attributes to a 'concurrent spiritual and intellectual readjustment of society' in the aftermath of the war, quoting C. S. Lewis as remarking that the undergraduates returning from that conflict included a higher proportion of Christians than had been the case after the First World War (Hastings, 2005, pp. 443, 443). Similarly Martin Thornton, who was a contemporary of these developments, writes of 'a profound and secret groping after real religion among the faithful, and a more thoughtful attitude towards the Christian Faith by a significant minority outside.' He links this with the nuclear threat hanging over everyone, of the fear of a 'war to end everything,' and says that this was a situation which only religion could face squarely. He also saw the beginning of a general reaction against 'two centuries of rationalistic materialism,' which was to become more pronounced in the following years (Thornton, 1963, pp. 3, 5). However, the sociologist Callum Brown sees this as part of a temporary renaissance which occurred throughout all the Protestant churches in Western Europe at this time before church attendance went into freefall which it shows little sign of stopping (Brown, 2002, p. 170).

Whatever the reasons, there was amongst people some who in the 1950's showed a turning towards the church and a search for a deeper sense of the spiritual realities, and it was natural therefore that some should find their way into the silence of retreat. What did they find waiting to receive them?

²⁹ This point is returned to in the next chapter.

H. Ignatian and Benedictine Spirituality compared

In both Catholic and Protestant circles there had long been a division within the ranks of retreat conductors about which model of retreat would serve the movements best – the Ignatian model or the Benedictine model, although in Roman Catholic circles the Ignatian approach had precedent. In the Church of England, the Ignatian method has long had its advocates, notably Longridge, but it had opponents. Evelyn Underhill had said ‘we are beginning to realise that St Ignatius never meant his masterpiece to be turned into a yearly exercise for the devout. It is too powerful, searching, even shattering for that.’ The annual withdrawal was an opportunity to ‘steep our souls in the beauty of the mysterious,’ to dwell quietly and without self-occupation in the atmosphere of God, and the best way of redressing the balance between the temporal and the eternal sides of our nature (*Vision*, Jan. 1932). So after the war, in 1947, APR organised a conference, under Bp Carpenter-Garnier, to decide which was the best approach.

1. APR Conference 1947

The first paper was delivered by Fr Herbert Mather, Superior of the Society of Retreat Conductors, who gave a very clear exposition and defence of the Ignatian method, stressing the adaptability of the *Exercises* and their focus upon enabling the retreatant to become free from all interior obstacles to discerning and obeying the will of God. He claimed that the *Exercises* gave one tools – methods of meditation, of discernment and of self-examination - which could be constantly applied to the normal course of the believer’s lives (Carpenter-Garnier, 1948, pp. 13-24). In the following address, James Wareham admitted that the Ignatian method was not the best for everyone, but argued that there was a sense in which all retreats should be Ignatian, in that they should deal with the fundamental facts of the Christian faith and help the retreatants to rediscover their vocation. The *Exercises* emphasised that the participants were not an audience passively listening to the addresses, but that they were there as ‘exercitants,’ actively making their own meditations. Moreover, the Ignatian approach stressed that the conductor should always be available to the retreatants

on a one-to-one basis and further that silence was required, not as an end in itself but as a way of securing solitude (Carpenter-Garnier, 1948, pp. 25-29).

Dom Augustine Morris, Abbot of Nashdom Abbey, spoke on the Benedictine way of retreat saying that there was not a Benedictine method but that the rule of St Benedict gave insights which were helpful. He suggested that Benedictine spirituality began with the mystery of God, while Ignatian spirituality with the sin of man. The Benedictine journey in prayer was from vocal prayer to contemplation and the retreat was not just an annual check-up, but an opportunity for prolonged worship. The retreatants formed a community, a temporary one no doubt, but none-the-less real, because their common worship was part of the larger unity, the Church, the Body of Christ. In the silence, they were brought face-to-face with God's reality, his holiness and his love (Carpenter-Garnier, 1948, pp. 36, 42-44). Dom Augustine talked about the kind of man the Retreat Conductor should be. First, he must be humble, helping the retreatant to look at God, for the Benedictine way of spirituality was God and Christ centred, not man-centred. Secondly, he should be a great lover of souls, because the Benedictine way was that of seeing Christ in everybody. Thirdly, he should possess the qualities of discernment, discretion and gentleness (Carpenter-Garnier, 1948, pp. 37-39).

Rev. F. Biggart of the Community of the Resurrection claimed that the *Exercises* were not of universal application, and that they thwarted people's free approach to God. They dealt solely with the point of Election, of choosing to serve God in the way which he had chosen for them, and were directed at fighting against the evil inclinations and at acquiring the contrary virtues. At no point were they concerned with inciting the soul to contemplation, the kind of prayer which earlier Christians would have regarded as normal. Ignatian spirituality was therefore the reversal of a tradition, although it had arisen at a time when the Church was rightly concerned about a false mysticism. The older spirituality had breathed a larger air – 'in the beginning God.' It was concerned with questions such as 'Who is God? What has he done? Who am I? What do I need firstly for others and then for myself?' A week of the *Spiritual Exercises* was like being in a gymnasium, with every exercise having a specific purpose,

whilst a week of sharing in the Liturgy, which was the basis of a Benedictine retreat, was like being in open woods and fields. It was 'a universe brimming with fruitful spiritual life, and allows the soul to wander about in it at will and to develop itself there' (Carpenter-Garnier, 1948, pp. 47-51).

2. APR Conference 1957

The theme was developed at a further conference arranged ten years later at Wydale Hall, the subject being on how to conduct a retreat. The first speaker was the Archbishop of York, Michael Ramsey, who spoke of the conductor being ready to speak simply about the Christian verities, to be a man of pastoral sympathy and himself a man of retreat. The aim of retreat was for each man to come to the realisation of God for himself, and to this aim Ramsey preferred to look upon the retreat as a 'good rest' towards God, letting the desire respond to Him which in time would give way to activities of love, imagination and prayer. The job of the conductor was to give short addresses about the Christian verities in terms of what they meant to him, not driving the point home as in a sermon but gently allowing them to come to rest in the retreatant's imagination and consciousness. He was to encourage the retreatant to meditate by evoking acts of faith, hope, love and penitence but must never lead such meditations. He must allow the individual to adore God in his own way, not filling the time with intercessions, yet all the time knowing that the individual has the backing of the whole church in the Eucharist and offices and that he would find the church's prayer sustaining, refreshing and liberating. Whilst each retreatant would have a different aim, the conductor would ensure that all found the presence of God and would be led through the stages of adoration, penitence, peace of soul and the will to serve God better. He would be conscious of the rhythm of the retreat but not of what was happening in each person's soul (Anstey, 1959, pp. 7-10).

The Abbot of Nashdown was again a speaker at the conference, as was the Revd Jack Lambeth SRC who spoke on the Ignatian approach (Anstey, 1959, pp. 12, 21). A further speaker was the Revd Hugh Maycock, Warden of Pusey House, who spoke about 'Retreats for Clergy.' Western Christianity was used to a faith which solved problems whereas Eastern Christianity was concerned with the sense of the mystery of faith which could not be understood but only entered

into. Retreat was a time for silence and refreshment, not for instruction or exhortation but for making the occasional leap forward. It was a time of recollection when certain truths grabbed hold of us, truths about goodness, beauty, joy, love and innocence, truths about God. It was to be a time when we regained the confidence in the universe of a child and to regain the certainty of our first belief in the truths that moved us (Anstey, 1959, pp. 51-55). This was indeed an approach to retreat which was refreshing, simple and foundational.

It should be contrasted with statements about retreat which had been made by two leaders of APR. Miles Sargent, a former General Secretary of APR, described the process as follows. A retreat was, he said, an intensely personal thing, although not selfish, with the purpose of consecrating one's personal powers to God. For this to happen there must be firstly a real desire to seek the will of God; then self examination, including an awareness of how one is using ones talents; thirdly an examination of conscience for sin, leading to penitence; next the seeking of the necessary grace to amend ones life, and finally the making of a resolution (*Vision*, Jan. 1953, pp. viii-x). Similarly, Canon Hood said that a retreat consisted of a series of carefully planned meditations, generally three a day, in which the conductor led the retreatants on to desire detachment from the unnecessary comforts which may be deterring them from carrying out God's will (Hood, 1958, p. 209). This focus on the retreatant is illustrated by the climax of the *Exercises* which is a powerful contemplation on the Love of God. Even here the response is that of self dedication rather than of wonder– 'take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my intellect, and all my will – all that I have and possess' (Exx. 234). This shows how thinking is centred on the self, although a self purified from merely selfish desire. Roman Catholic teaching must have been similar to this, but at their best retreat leaders thought wider than this.

3. Two Books

Further guidance on the two methods was given in two books written after the Second War which offer an insight into what was then current practice. The first was by James Wareham in 1950 who wanted to share his experience as retreat giver and as a trainer of conductors with “ordinary priests” who are

called to conduct retreats for “ordinary people” (Wareham, 1950, p. 5). Wareham’s approach tended to the Ignatian – ‘the Ignatian method is *the* method’ - with an emphasis upon the work to be done by the retreatant. A retreat was a time alone with God, although not a passive ‘going into retreat’, but rather an active ‘making a retreat.’ He quoted Baron von Hugel as saying that the purpose and function of a retreat was direct personal instruction on prayer and meditation, the training of the conscience and the discovery and reformation of personal faults (Wareham, 1950, pp. 12, 38).

The second book was published in 1963 and was written by Fr Hugh SSF, who covered much the same ground as Wareham but was more analytical and Benedictine in his approach. A retreat was in essence withdrawal and silence, while we rested in God waiting for him to make himself known to us, ‘a deliberate and sustained act of worship’ as we gave him our unhurried attention. ‘When people obeyed their instinct and went away to live with a hermit for a time and share the healing simplicity of this life, the practice of retreat was born.’ The Benedictine principles of withdrawal and the peaceful benediction of prayerful and beautiful surroundings appealed to modern man. He said that at its simplest, a retreat was nothing other than the setting aside of a few days from our ordinary affairs to realise that God has a claim upon us, for the realization of God-in-himself, and for the realization of God’s will for the individual. ‘It is a time of withdrawal and silence while we rest in God, waiting for him to make himself known to us.’ The timetable of the retreat would give the work which needed to be done, with a routine of worship and relaxation, of addresses followed by meditation and of meals and time for walking (Hugh, 1963, p. 11).

Both authors had useful things to say about the addresses, agreeing that they should be short and designed to stimulate the retreatants’ own meditations rather than to demonstrate the conductor’s abilities. In his preface to Wareham’s guide, Bishop Mark Carpenter-Garnier had emphasised that there was the need for a high standard of skill and efficiency in the conductor, who should deal in his addresses with the proper order of subjects, both logically and psychologically, ‘so that those under his care may be led forward step by step towards the culminating point of the retreat’s essence, which was to be found not

in the addresses, but in the quiet and stillness in which the retreatants were encouraged to pursue their own quest with God (Wareham, 1950, p. 3). Wareham regarded them as a regrettable but necessary intrusion into the silence, intended to point the listeners towards the rich veins of the great truths of the nature of God, his purposes for us, his gifts, his mercy and his grace rather than doing the digging for them (Wareham, 1950, p. 32).

Fr Hugh recommended that as well as the addresses, periods of instruction of 15-20 minutes duration should be included, giving basic teaching on the purpose of a retreat, how to pray and meditate, and on fasting. The addresses themselves should present the Christian tradition in varied styles as each person meditated in a different way, offering pegs to hang thoughts on, or just one leading thought and application, or using an imaginative approach, or again be aspirational in form, consisting of phrases or ideas turned directly into prayer. God was heard not only in the addresses but also in the prayer, through listening to Scripture and in the words of hymns, as he gradually cleared away obstacles to his further grace, although we might not recognise his voice until after the retreat when we looked back upon it and realised that God had indeed spoken (Hugh, 1963, 30-32).

Wareham regarded times of worship as opportunities for the retreatants to relax. He wanted to avoid the extremes of some Anglo-Catholics, suggesting that the Prayer Book should be used for Holy Communion, celebrated with simple ceremonial. If the retreat was for priests, then the offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, and possibly the lesser offices could be said; if it was for laity, then use should be made of Evensong and Compline only. His advice was to choose lessons and psalms to fit, and to use hymns which lightened the atmosphere, gave relief to otherwise silent voices, and helped the devotion (Wareham, 1950, pp. 48 -50). Fr Hugh also regarded the worship as an essential part of the retreat, with the psalms and lessons all filling and feeding the subconscious mind. Corporate prayer extended the horizon beyond the retreat and the individual retreatant, and created an atmosphere of expectancy. About everything, including the interviews, there was to be 'unhurried attention to God, his glory, goodness and mercy,' and the whole retreat would then become a

deliberate and sustained act of worship – a thoroughly Benedictine approach (Hugh, 1963, p. 20).

Fr Hugh recommended the reading of books, somewhat frowned upon in the Ignatian tradition, as an aid to relaxation. He said that the quietness was first of all a physical peace to aid a mental peace which then brought spiritual awareness, as the retreatants entered into that silence which is the background of all creation. ‘No silence, no retreat’ - but only on the second morning would the benefit of it come. Further, he recognised that there were different purposes of retreat. The first was ‘critical,’ when deciding on a course of action or the realisation of one’s vocation. In such a retreat, one would concentrate upon the majesty of God and his claim upon us. The second kind of retreat was ‘dedicational’ when, having decided upon the direction of life, one dedicated oneself to follow it. An ordination retreat was of such a kind. The third purpose was for refreshment, although this sometimes meant rededication. Any retreat was an opportunity to experience again the love and the presence of God, catch a glimpse of the glory to come, and to gain a new sense of the reality of power and grace (Hugh, 1963, pp. 18, 21).

In practice, most retreats were a mixture of the Benedictine and Ignatian methods and to some extent followed the need of the retreatant. At times, the retreatant needed the challenge of the Ignatian way with its emphasis upon the work of the retreat and the looking for a definite outcome; at other times, they needed the time to rest in God and to leave the outcome with Him. I imagine that a Roman Catholic conductor would go along with this teaching. There was also a third approach which was beginning to emerge to which we will now turn.

1. The Contemplative Approach

In the Catholic tradition, the Ignatian retreat had been so formative that the older practice of silent prayer had almost been forgotten. The Anglican tradition had followed, but there were those who were making wordless prayer the norm for retreat. Speaking at the Anglo-Catholic Congress in 1920, R. G. Rawlinson, whilst staying within the generally accepted pattern, had suggested that even those in the purgative stage could try simple affective contemplative prayer such

as the Practice of the Presence and the Prayer of Quiet. He went as far as saying that there were those simple souls who go straight to wordless devotion, and could not possibly cope with Ignatian spirituality (Rawlinson, 1920, pp. 174, 175). Thirty years later, Ian Ramsey reminded his listeners that contemplative prayer was the prayer of simplicity and that it had been made too sophisticated by the church's teaching:

Enoch walked with God; he was not a clever man, he was not a modern clever civilised man – he was just a primitive man doing what it is in the heart and wish of everyman to do, and he walked with God.

Those outside the church did not understand dogma, 'yet there is in their souls something of the power to pray and meditate and wonder and adore.' When the Christian life of prayer somehow made its way home to the souls of modern men and women, then later on, in a flash, dogma will make sense and understanding would follow (*Vision*, January 1952, pp. viii-x). At this same time, Fr William of Glasshampton and later, guided by Gilbert Shaw, the monks at Crawley Down and also the sisters at Fairacres were seeking to live and pray as contemplatives, concentrating on the prayer of quiet simplicity (Curtis, 1978; Hacking, 1988, chap. 7).

Back in the 1920's, Marion Dunlop had formed the Fellowship of Meditation, with a particular concern for the healing of oneself and others. Her method was to relax sitting in a comfortable position, to meditate by repeating a short phrase based upon biblical teaching although not a direct quote from scripture, at first for short periods of four to five minutes observed frequently throughout the day, staying with the one passage for a few days before moving on to another one. She taught, 'We must make a stillness in our thoughts and shed callous desires save the one supreme desire to bring our whole consciousness to be healed' (Dunlop, 1955, pp. 56, 46). Miss Dunlop continued her work until her death in 1974 (*Vision*, July 1974, p. 7). The members of the Fellowship meet three times a year to receive further instruction and to practice their meditation, some weekends being completely silent after the evening meal (W/Meditation, 2011).

This is part of the context within which we should see the work of the Rev. R. G. Coulson, who encouraged contemplative retreats in the Anglican tradition.

Coulson was the leader of a group of some thirty 'Priest Contemplatives', most of them, like himself, coming from an Evangelical background (Hood, 1958). He was in the 1950's an Anglican rector based at Stanstead near Sevenoaks in Kent, and published a book entitled *Into God* in which he taught a particular method of contemplative prayer. He describes the growing interest in mysticism which, as we have already noted, had been growing ever since the end of the nineteenth century. As a result, experiments in meditation and contemplation were taking place all over Britain in an uncounted but substantial number of groups, but, he claimed, no branch of the church had taken formal note of this development, even though a number of clergy and lay people were involved. Experiments had often begun under influence of Eastern religions, perhaps because they were regarded as being more spiritual than the Christian church or because of their novelty, but later people had begun to realise that what they were doing was thoroughly biblical. As well as giving some guidance to these groups, he wanted to work towards the rediscovery of the ideal of Union with God within a church which had lost that sense of the vision of God which had been the strength of the medieval church (Coulson, 1956, pp. 7, 8, 19).

Coulson pointed out that methods of contemplative prayer taught within the Church were usually adopted from some scheme associated with the active orders, for example Ignatian methods of meditation. These were right for some but not for all, and so outside the church there was growing experimentation with various forms of yoga and other contemplative exercises. He claimed that what he was offering was a method which was biblical and also based upon the way in which, he suggested, every human need was satisfied. A full exposition of his method is unnecessary for the purposes of this thesis, other than to say that he used selected sayings from the Bible, each of which pointed to a particular quality of God which, as the images of God, we were also to share. So, for example, the meditators might choose a passage which spoke of God's peace. They then concentrated on this quality, first in the mind, then in the heart and finally in the will with the aim of making the particular characteristic their own (Coulson, 1956, p. 29).

He taught his method in retreats in which addresses led into periods of guided meditation which followed this threefold pattern. Although not rooted in any previous spiritual tradition, it fitted in with his Evangelical roots. Coulson had recognised the existence of this important contemplative stream within traditional and contemporary spirituality which he felt, with some justification in both the Church of England and the Roman churches, was being ignored. Although his fellowship still exists, his methods have not spread beyond its members, but he was pointing the way to developments which were yet to come which we will review in our next chapter.

J. Some Retreat Conductors

As in our last chapter, we now look at some of the people who led retreats during this period, beginning with a Franciscan friar. The main work of the various groups who looked to St Francis as their inspiration was social, pastoral and evangelistic. Nevertheless, they too were invited to lead retreats and Fr Algy, who possessed a great ability to win the affection and loyalty of others, was the one to draw these groups together. He was a charismatic retreat giver and spiritual director, involved in this ministry for many years. For example, from 1943 onwards he went every two years to Walkerburn among the foothills of Peeblesshire to conduct two retreats for the Sisters of St Peter who had care of two homes there. The last retreat which he ever gave was one which he conducted there for clergy in September 1955 despite, as he was so often, being in great pain. The retreatants crowded into the chapel and listened to him give an exposition which was in many ways reminiscent of what he himself might have listened to in his Evangelical youth. It was on the Second Epistle to Timothy and was faithful to the text and relevant to the situation of his hearers. The notes of it, printed in his biography, seem to confirm Longridge's criticisms of this pattern of addresses, there being no overall development of a consistent theme, so that it is almost impossible to summarise his message. Some of the addresses would appear to have been over-long, but his hearers must have returned home both challenged and encouraged (Denis, 1964, pp. 197-199).

During this period, members of SSJE, including James Naters and Christopher Bryant, continued to be valued as conductors of retreats for clergy, laypeople and religious, but, although during this period the Society published retreats given by members of previous generations, no addresses from this time seem to be available.³⁰ The main ministry of the Kelham Fathers was in the training of men for the priesthood, and again no records of retreat addresses seem to have been kept.

Later, Fr Charles Stothert, who was much in demand as a conductor in the fifties, left his parish in 1948 to become a member of the Society of Retreat Conductors and did much for APR before moving on from that body in 1953 to become chaplain to a convent (SRC Archives Box3/CM2/21/10/47). Another noted conductor who again was freed from parochial ministry was Fr Hugh Maycock (1903-1980), at one time Rector of Little St Mary's, Cambridge, and later Warden of Pusey House, who is mentioned above. Another secular priest, Reginald Somerset Ward (1881-1962), from 1915 onwards devoted himself to a hidden ministry of spiritual direction. He seems to have led few retreats, but between 1956 and 1959 produced, with the encouragement of APR, three short books giving material and advice for people to use in private retreats which seem to express the ethos of the Anglican retreat tradition at that time. It is sensible; the retreatant is to have eight hours sleep each night, three meals a day, and two periods of recreation. It is disciplined, observing absolute silence, and two or three periods of meditation each day depending upon the length of the retreat. It is practical, with the retreatant encouraged to do one act of charity each day, perhaps writing a letter (although incoming letters are not to be opened), giving of alms or doing some act of kindness. It is, when possible, rooted in worship, sharing in a daily Eucharist and one other corporate act. It is biblical, as is shown by the three booklets giving meditations based upon the stories of Mary at the sepulchre, on the transfiguration and on the Holy Spirit respectively. His printed 'addresses' are short, clear and simple, and the reading of them is to be followed by silent prayer and a meditation. The spirit of the retreat is one of a quiet and

³⁰ I recall attending an SSJE clergy retreat at St Edward's House during the early sixties, remembering especially the reverence of the offices, the beauty of the chapel and the simple but adequate accommodation.

gentle calm, filled by a balanced but sincere devotion. Here we see a private retreat adopting the form of a preached retreat (Ward, 1956; 1957; 1959).

Another spiritual director who was called upon to lead retreats was Martin Thornton (1915-1986), best known for his books on spirituality and ascetic theology. Unlike Shaw, he spent part of his life in parish ministry, but was most fulfilled when teaching at St Deiniol's Library and later running the ordination training course in the Truro Diocese (Proctor, 2003).

One retreat leader is almost unique in that he ran retreats for his working class parish of Haggerston in East London. He is Fr H. A. Wilson, and is an Anglo-Catholic of the variety who seems to have been at home in that area. We have a copy of the addresses which he gave at the retreat house at Farnham Castle in 1951 called *Great Expectations*. He insists on the rule of silence, without making a issue of it, and his four talks are simple and well illustrated, just the sort which would appeal to his not very articulate audience (Wilson, 1951).

But the greatest of these conductors, who was in many ways the embodiment of the Anglican retreat tradition at its best, catholic but broad in his sympathies, scholarly and a natural contemplative, was Archbishop Michael Ramsey. Here, I suggest, is that combination of the Benedictine and Ignatian approaches with a deep contemplative and pastoral attitude, which epitomises the Anglican retreat tradition as it had evolved by 1960. Ramsey put all this into practice in his leadership of retreats, a leadership which grew out of his own prayer of quiet and adoration. I conclude this section therefore with a description of him in his later years leading a retreat at Pleshey. He spoke about one of his own favourite themes – the Transfiguration:

The addresses were shot through with smiles and amusement without the least detraction from reverence or the least lowering of the tone...(They) were quite short, probably less than fifteen minutes each. No one could fail to be lifted towards the rest of their souls in God. The last address was on heaven, and was perfect eloquence for the highest of themes, and without notes. He bubbled with ecstasy over the beatific vision. He had so real a sense of the joining of the angels and archangels here and now in worship. He ended movingly, 'Thank you so much for letting me join you. Alleluia, Amen'...He celebrated the Holy Communion, Rite A, with a profound quiet, and without emphases...In the confessional he was affectionate,

human and wise – accepting an *attrait* but adding to it with a delicacy and sureness of touch. (Chadwick, 1991, pp. 357, 358)

This is certainly how I remember him and it combines the best in Anglican and Roman Catholic retreats.

K. Retreatants

As we have seen, the *General List of Forthcoming Retreats* published in January 1951 by APR listed a total of 322 retreats, of which 79 were mixed retreats, a relatively new post-war development, made possible by changing attitudes in society, and only 30 for laymen. A similar list published in December 1958 listed 467 retreats, of which 175 were mixed retreats (to which typically more women than men would come), and only 60 specifically for laymen. These figures show that there had been a marked increase in the total number of retreats over that seven year period, but that the proportion of women to men remained about the same.

Turning to the social mix of retreatants, at the APR Conference in 1947 Fr Andrew Blair of the Community of the Resurrection complained that the chief active supporters of the retreat movement, far from being the hoped-for lower classes, were to be found amongst the main beneficiaries of an unprecedented national wealth, namely the middle classes, who had the leisure and the money for such spiritual luxuries (Carpenter-Garnier, 1948, p. 1). Even more disappointingly, the Revd R. H. Foster said that there was little desire for retreat amongst most church members, and those who did come were in the upper age ranges. He identified three groups which made up a typical congregation; the first was the over 45's who were the backbone of the church and were the most likely retreat goers; the second were the 25-50's who, with their families, jobs and children, were too busy to go on retreat; finally, there were the under 25's whose lives were full of activity, business and bustle, and who refused to consider the idea at all (Carpenter-Garnier, 1948, pp. 7, 8).

Parish retreats were still being actively encouraged by APR which published a leaflet about them written by the Revd Charles Smith, at that time APR secretary, and summarised at a conference for retreat givers held in 1959.

He said that the Liturgical movement, which was so influential in the Church of England at the time, was rightly emphasising the corporate nature of the church, but that this led to the danger of externalising devotion, and to the lack of deep foundations. As prayer and the spiritual life thrived in silence, if corporate worship was to have depth, individual and group activities must be deeply grounded in the quiet of a parish retreat. They must be a real parish affair, not just arranged for an elite, and so all the parish leaders should be encouraged to come; if they would not come it might be that they were not suitable as leaders. On the other hand, one needed to be selective, because to have the wrong people present could disrupt the event. There needed to be much preparatory work, including teaching people how to meditate and personally asking people to come. A suitable conductor, one with an imaginative presentation and an understanding of ordinary people, must be engaged, and the retreatants were to be encouraged to concentrate upon God, not on ecclesiastical matters. If people could not go away, there was still value in holding the retreat in the parish itself, using the church and the parish hall, although even then the rule of silence must be observed - a return to the nineteenth century parish retreat (Anstey, 1959, pp. 44-49). Speaking at the same conference, Archbishop Michael Ramsey suggested that the first time a parish went away together might not be for a retreat, but for a time of instruction, devotion, recreation, but also a time of silence as a definite step towards the first retreat. 'The only initiation into silence is silence' (Anstey, 1959, p. 11). The annual or biannual parish retreat did become a feature of the life of a number of parishes, mainly of an Anglo-Catholic flavour, and greatly deepened the devotional life of the congregation and of the individuals.

In 1955, APR described itself as consisting of 'members of the Anglican Communion who seek to promote the development of the Spiritual life by means of retreats conducted on definite principles' (*Vision*, Dec. 1955, p. 116). The same could be said of the Society of Retreat Conductors, who were more extreme in their form of High Churchmanship and who were firmer in holding on to their principles, and it is with an extended study of this group that this chapter ends.

K. The Society of Retreat Conductors, 1924 - 1955 – a case study

To pick out SRC for special consideration risks giving to this organisation a more significant role within the whole Anglican retreat movement than in fact it had, its influence not being anywhere as wide as that of APR. However its history illustrates and illuminates many of the issues which we have considered in this chapter and especially their relationship with the Roman Catholic church. What follows is based almost entirely on primary sources to be found in their archives.

1. The Birth of the Society

Although established in 1924, a leaflet produced somewhere around 1933 traces the origins of the Society directly to the publication of Plater's book in 1912 (SRC Archives CB/PC/L1 p. 2). The germ of the idea for the Society is contained in the report which Major Arthur Bowker and others presented to the Bishop of Rochester after the visit which Bowker and Philip Bacon had made between September 15th and 19th 1913 to the Belgian houses (SRC Archives CB/PC/BV). This had envisaged a small team of trained priests giving retreats for men in a dedicated retreat house, which is what SRC was always intended to be.

Bowker (1867-1950) was a veteran of the Klondike gold rush, who was at one time a waterworks engineer in Kent, an enthusiastic officer in the Territorial Army at Woolwich, an active member of the Church of England Men's Society and a committed Anglo-Catholic (SRC Archives CB/PC/O). He was the one who had the original vision, was the driving force behind its implementation, and its chief patron. He was also to be closely involved with the establishment of the Shrine of our Lady at Walsingham where he became one of its guardians which tells us a deal about his churchmanship (Walsingham, 2011). The other founder was Fr Herbert Mather, who had served in the French Red Cross from 1915-1919, was chaplain to the nuns at St Saviour's Priory, Haggerston, and the Society's superior until his death in 1955.³¹ At St Saviour's he taught a very

³¹ Biographical information from Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1947.

strict and old fashioned kind of Anglo-Catholic spirituality (Letter from Sister Mary Teresa 18/11/2010).

In 1923, Bowker and Bacon returned to the Continent, taking with them Fr Mather, Fr Edwin Power and Fr Frank Wyatt and visiting houses in Belgium and Northern France (SRC Archives CB/PC/L1, p. 2). During their tour they saw specialist teams of fully-trained priests using Ignatian methods leading retreats for working men of at least three full days' duration in houses which were designed and built especially for the purpose. This contrasted with the situation in this country where, so they felt, badly trained priests were offering inadequate retreats, the length of which often allowed for only one day of full silence, and which were held in houses that were poorly and cheaply adapted for the purpose. Bowker and his companions were convinced that the short cuts being made in response to the increased demand prevented the retreatants from experiencing the real life-changing power of the retreat.

The four priests began to meet regularly to study the Ignatian method, and they resolved to form the Society of Retreat Conductors 'for the purpose of conducting Retreats according to the method of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, and for the furthering of the Retreat Movement in such manner as shall from time to time be decided' (SRC Archives Box3/CM1/09/11/1923). By October 1924, Frs Wyatt and Bacon had joined Fr Mather in his home at 161 Tuffnell Park Road to live together in a shared discipline. They were receiving an annual grant of £250 from the Anglo-Catholic Congress Committee, as well as accepting fees for services in local parishes. Through the generosity of Mather, they had bought a lease on the adjacent property so that they had space both for other priests to join them, and also to offer hospitality to a limited number of retreatants (*Vision*, 1920-1990, Nov. 1924, p. 12-13).

2. Tuffnell Park

The birth of the Society was announced in an article published in *Vision*. The anonymous author said that the intention of the members of this new society was to provide the best retreat house offering retreats lasting for the best duration, using the best method and led by the best retreat conductors. This was

their mission, inspired by what had been so eloquently described by Charles Plater and by what they had themselves seen on the Continent, but putting this into practice was not to be easy.

There were three levels of belonging to the Society. The first level consisted of full members, who lived together in an Oratorian style, sharing income and disciplined life of prayer. This freed them to specialise in the study of the retreat methods, especially the Ignatian Exercises, in the leadership of them, and in training others in their use. Their vestments and chapel furnishings, which remained in the Society's possession until 2006, show that they belonged to that section of the Anglo-Catholic community which looked for its inspiration to the current practice in Rome rather than to pre-reformation Catholicism. There were never more than four full members at any one time, even though the vision always was for a larger community of up to 12 members. The full members formed the chapter which took all the decisions about the Society's life. Secondly, there were priest associates, men who were trained to lead retreats in the name of the Society, and thirdly a select group of lay associates, in the main maiden ladies, who bank-rolled its work and assisted in practical ways.

The limited accommodation in the Society's first home in Tufnell Park Road gave little scope for welcoming retreatants, but during 1925 and 1926 members were kept busy responding to invitations to lead retreats from all over the country, visiting some 32 different houses over that period (SRC Archives Box 5/RR). By July 1926, members were realising that the number of invitations to lead retreats elsewhere would diminish, and therefore they began to arrange their own programme (SRC Archives Box3/CM1/31/07/1926).

The members had from the start very ambitious plans for their 'best retreat house'. The *Vision* article of 1924 had described a house with three wings, one for men, one for women and another for children, grouped around a cruciform church with a fourth wing for the resident community with their own library and common room (*Vision*, Nov. 1924, p. 12). In 1927, an estate near West Kingsdown Kent, some 20 miles from London and close to Major Bowker's home at Wrotham, was purchased by Bowker and presented by him to the Society. It consisted of some 100 acres, with woodland and two cottages, and

became known as Stacklands. An architect, Mr H Gibbons of Abbey House, Westminster, was appointed to draw up plans, and his architectural model of the great project (the children's wing had disappeared by this stage) was displayed at the Anglo-Catholic Congress meeting in 1930, attracting much interest. The two wings would each have accommodation for some thirty retreatants who would stay in individual rooms. These were to be spacious and private, furnished in such a way as to encourage devotion (SRC Archives CB/PC/L 3).

By 1931 it seemed as if all was set for the Society's chapter to instruct the architect to go ahead with the project when their plans were caught up in the church politics of the time. A new Evangelical Bishop of Rochester, the Rt Rev. Martin Smith, resented the possibility of the society settling in his diocese – or at least this is how it appeared to the members. He was willing to grant permission for the administration of Communion in the chapel of the proposed house, but only on the condition that the Society give an honourable undertaking not to reserve the consecrated elements. In Chapter, the Fr Superior expressed the view that reservation was very necessary in the particular work which the Society was engaged, and it was agreed to delay the building and to find a suitable house in a diocese whose bishop would be willing to accede to their wishes (SRC Archives Box3/CM 1/15/12/1931; 02/08/1932; 21/10/1932; 15/12/1932).³²

³² This is an opportunity to mention one issue which has some bearing on the story told in this thesis. One of the things for which Anglo-Catholics fought was the right to reserve and venerate the Blessed Sacrament, a practice resisted by many Evangelicals and others because it seemed to be against the ethos of the Established church as expressed in Article 25 of the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion, which specified that the Sacraments 'were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about,' but to be duly used. The issue had come into prominence during the years of the Great War because of the need for such provision amongst the soldiers and sailors. However, it was not just for use in an emergency for the communion of the sick that they wanted the privilege, but also as a focus of private and public devotion, according, so they argued, to the long-standing practice of the Christian Church (Michell, 1920). In their churches, as in Roman Catholic churches, it was given prominence either on the high altar or at a side altar, with the lamp lighted before it. As Pickering says, this was probably acceptable to many Anglicans; what was not acceptable was its cultic use in adoration, benediction and exposition, all very precious and emotional forms of worship, and a sign of Catholic devotion. It was at the 1923 Congress that Bp Frank Weston stirred up great enthusiasm for the worship of Christ in the tabernacle saying 'He calls you from the tabernacle: we adore Him on the altar' and he went on to plead with Anglo-Catholics to 'fight for their tabernacles' (Pickering, 1989, p. 61). In his talk on Retreats at the 1920 Congress, Briscoe had expressed the hope that in retreat each day would be able to close with Benediction, and the final evening with one hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, so linking the evening prayers with the Communion they had made in the morning and the Communion which they hoped to make next day (Briscoe, 1920, p. 182).

3. Queens Gate, 1934 – 1940.

By early 1934, the Society had moved from Tufnell Park Road to 37 Queens Gate, with permission from the Bishop of London to reserve the sacrament in their oratory. Here, they could welcome up to eight male retreatants at a time, and also host one or two ladies in an annex who were able to make their private retreat in the chapel. It was not the best retreat house, although better than the one in which they had begun, but, because of mortgage payments, high running costs and lack of retreatants, it was in fact to prove a liability.

The leaflet published in about 1933 justified the existence of the Society with these words, 'To conduct a retreat is not difficult; to conduct a good retreat is not easy.' There was no lack of priests willing to be conductors, but not all had the aptitude or the leisure for serious preparation. The Religious made the best conductors, but not even all of them possessed the gifts needed for this work, and the most able of them could not always be spared for this specialised ministry. It was therefore necessary to supplement the work being done by priests and religious who were 'bravely making the best of a bad job,' by a Society which could specialise in this ministry (SRC Archives CB/PC/L1, p. 1)

Newspaper cuttings in the archives show that between June 1934 and August 1935, an ambitious programme of forthcoming retreats to be led by members of the Society was announced in the *Church Times*, including 28 for men, four for priests and three for ordinands, all to be held at No 37. In addition, 17 retreats were arranged for women, many to be held at Oakhurst in Erith, which the Society was using regularly for this purpose. In the event, retreats for men at Queens Gate were poorly attended, perhaps in part because SRC remained faithful to its policy of presenting only retreats in the Ignatian tradition. Mather's copious notes preserved on file cards, now unfortunately lost after the closure of Stacklands because of storage problems, revealed that his approach to the Exercises was a literal one, sticking very closely to the letter of them and using limited personal illustrative material. Perhaps in practice his addresses were not as dry as they appeared to be on paper.

4. Stacklands, 1940 - 1955

By 1938, the lay associates of the Society, all of whom had given substantial amounts towards the cost of a permanent house, were becoming restless about the lack of progress. At the AGM in the October of that year, they proposed a motion asking the chapter to reopen negotiations with the Bishop of Rochester and to proceed with arrangements for the building work. It was reported to an Extraordinary General Meeting held the following February that Bishop Smith had now agreed to the reservation of the sacrament, but on strict conditions and only on certain occasions when it was desired by retreatants. The treasurer reported that there were not sufficient funds available to pay for the first phase of the project as originally proposed. However the Society's new architect, Mr Leslie Moore, presented plans for a Domestic Block, reduced in size, which would contain a Dining Room, Library, Chapel and office, with accommodation on three floors for three priests and two maids and which could be erected within the available budget. He suggested that it might be possible to cope with eight to ten retreatants, some of whom could sleep in one of the existing cottages. It was agreed to proceed with this design (SRC Archives Box5/AGM/21/10/1938; Box3/CM 1/01/02/1939). Work began on June 16th 1939.

Soon after the outbreak of war in September 3rd 1939, 37 Queens Gate, which had already been placed on the market, was closed, and the staff and resident Society members dispersed. Fr Mather took up residence at St Saviour's Priory Haggerston, and some retreats for women were held there. Work on the new house suffered delays, but it was eventually ready for use by the end of April 1940, and the Superior moved into residence on the 29th of that month, the first Mass being said the following morning. The Bishop of Rochester, now Bishop C. M. Chavasse, came to bless the house on the Feast of St Ignatius.

The move into Kent led to the break up of the original team of priests, and for most of the time in succeeding years there were only two in residence, with Associate members being increasingly drawn upon to lead retreats. One highlight was when Fr Charles Stothert came into residence in January 1948. He seems to have had wide contacts both through his previous work in the diocese of Bath and Wells and as a member of Convocation, and during 1949 he led retreats in 11 other houses, this extended ministry continuing into the following years. He also

served on the APR Council (*Vision*, July 1950). Not since before the war had the Society's influence been so widely spread. He left in 1953 having served for five years. Major Bowker, who had moved into residence in the house, died on June 12th 1950, having been a 'great invalid' during his last few years (SRC Archives Box5/AGM 1951). At the Annual General Meeting of the Fellowship in 1951, Fr Mather paid tribute to him as the original founder, 'whose life and work and generosity had been the great inspiration of the Society' (SRC Archives Box3/FSRC/1951).

Bowker had not lived to see work which commenced on a new wing in early December 1951 after some years of planning. It included a chapel and bedrooms and was blessed on April 10th 1953. Although the design was far from the grandeur of the original plans, the vision of large individual rooms for retreatants was retained, making real solitude possible. Despite low attendances at retreats, it was decided to proceed with a second wing, where there would be room for nine men retreatants, the chapel block being reserved for women, together with accommodation for one priest, a library and sitting room. After some delays, work began on March 21st 1955, but less than four months later, on June 1st, Mather died.

So the first phase of the life of SRC had come to an end. A leaflet written by Mather shortly after Bowker's death reveals that the vision for the Society had not changed in the light of experience since its foundation (SRC Archives CB/PC/1L2). After nearly thirty years of work, a retreat house existed, although it was not the best house that had been envisaged and the use being made of it was limited. There was now no team of retreat givers, only one priest remaining in residence. Positively however there was a group of priest associates who had been trained and had some experience in the work. Like all other groups and houses working in the field, the Society had failed to persuade men to come into retreat, although this had been an important part of its purposes when it was formed. No plans had been made for the continuing work of the Society; there was no designated leader, no management structure to replace the Chapter which had virtually ceased to exist, no clear vision for the coming years and no longer could members rely upon the support of an enthusiastic patron. The future looked

bleak, and the demise of SRC might have followed closely upon the deaths of its founders. In the event, as is recounted in the next chapter, during the nineteen seventies SRC was to be resurrected in a new form, in response to developments in the retreat movement at that time.

J. Conclusion

The case of the Society of Retreat Conductors, to which we return at the end of the next chapter, is a clear example of the influence of Roman Catholic practice upon the development of the retreat tradition within the English Church, although in the event not a happy one. It had started its life in the 1920's with a clear and bold vision, inspired by what the founders had seen in France and Belgium and responding to the needs of the time, but in a number of ways their ambitions had been unrealistic from the beginning. The houses which they had so much admired were operated by Jesuits who had greater resources in finance, manpower and experience than the members of SRC would ever muster. They were staffed by priests whose formation in the Ignatian tradition had been long and rigorous, a training which could not be quickly reproduced however much one studied the Exercises. Again, the Continental houses were operating in countries where retreats had been part of the spiritual scene for three centuries or more, whereas in England after 60 years they were still viewed as a dangerous novelty by many church people. Also, France and Belgium were societies where the working-class culture was permeated by Catholicism, whereas here, even though Anglo-Catholicism was being more widely accepted, its adherents were far more likely to be found in Brighton than in Brixton. Finally, the Society had also proved to be inflexible, only using the Ignatian method and insisting that week-end retreats last at least from a Friday evening to early Monday morning, even though few working people stopped work for the week end until lunch time on Saturday.

Although perhaps an extreme case, the story of SRC is symptomatic of the whole Anglican retreat movement over the period covered by this chapter. The movement never fulfilled the high, but in retrospect unrealistic, hopes raised by Plater's enthusiastic advocacy of the retreat method. It had not developed any

intellectually rigorous theology for what it was trying to do. Although it had produced some outstanding retreat leaders with deep spiritual gifts, in the main, compared with their continental counterparts, they remained a rather amateur group. In many cases, the diocesan houses which had been opened were used more frequently for conferences and training events than retreats, and could not have financially survived otherwise. Retreatants were in the main drawn from a very narrow section of society, mostly middle class women, and, apart from at their ordinations, proportionately few even of the clergy ever made a retreat. Despite the initial encouragement of some Evangelicals and many bishops, the practice remained mainly the preserve of the High Church section of the Church, others perhaps being excluded by the apparent intransigence of some of the advocates of the practice.

But this is to belittle what had been achieved, stimulated not only by developments in Roman Catholicism but by a culture which was in some ways more open to spiritual things. More people were making a retreat than ever before, many of them 'middle-of-the-road' churchgoers. An Anglican retreat tradition had been established which was aware of the breadth of Catholic practice, drawing insights from both the Ignatian and Benedictine streams, and which was pastoral, devotional, flexible and contemplative. Although some Anglo-Catholics, such as those in SRC, tended to look to the practices of Rome as their guide, most conductors, certainly those working in the Diocesan Houses, drew upon the riches of the Prayer Book for their worship and avoided the extremes. Writing in 1959, Bishop J. W. C. Wand summed up the development of retreats in the first half of the twentieth century in these words:

The growth of the practice of retreats during the first half of the present century has been most remarkable. A rapid spread at the start, when it was the latest thing, a reaction after the first enthusiasm had ebbed away, firm determination during the special difficulties of the war period, and a steady growth [so that] the movement has become a normal part of the life and practice of the contemporary church (Anstey, 1959, p. 5).

This form of devotion had indeed become an established part of Anglican spirituality, albeit one honoured more by good will than by active participation.

Despite all the changes in contemporary life, the form of the retreat had developed little over the past hundred years, being the pattern which Benson had inherited from the Roman Catholic church. This was about to change as the movement entered a period of experiment and diversification, under the influence of the developments of Vatican II which we will now describe.

Chapter 4. Vatican II and the diversification of Retreats in the Church of England, 1962-2008

At the beginning of the 1960's, within the Church of England the retreat movement was at a high point. The short-lived growth in church membership during the late 1940's and 1950s had led to a noticeable increase in the number of those making a retreat which probably reached a peak rather belatedly around 1964. It was reported at the APR Annual General Meeting in 1965 that in the previous year some 20,411 retreatants had attended one of the 1,250 retreats which had been announced in *Vision*, in addition to those making private retreats and those attending closed events (*Vision*, Jan. 1966, p. 3). These were cautious figures, as the 40,000 retreatants a year quoted by Martin Thornton shows (Thornton, 1963, p. 5). Some retreat houses, such as the Diocesan House at Pleshey and the Community owned houses at Clewer and Hemingford Grey, were running events almost back to back because so many people wanted to make a retreat.

Despite this success, there were those who were questioning the validity of the formal silent preached retreat based upon gospel meditations. The result was that, whilst for the first 100 years the way in which retreats were offered in the Church of England hardly changed, mirroring what was happening in the Roman Catholic Church, at the end of the next 50 years the practice is so diverse that retreatants are now advised to check carefully on the nature of a particular event before booking to make sure it is what they are looking for (*Retreats*, 2008, p. 6). How had this development come about?

As we try to answer this question in this chapter, we will find that once again the evolution of the Anglican retreat tradition was stimulated by progress in the Church of Rome. The bishops assembled in council at the Vatican between 1962 and 1965 gave unexpected sanction to experiment and change in the life of the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, the relationship between the two communions had changed so that Anglicans were not merely stimulated by new developments, but, because of greater ecumenical freedom, were often involved in the new initiatives with their Roman colleagues almost from the beginning.

Further, the source of many of the new ideas was no longer continental Catholicism, but the religious orders in the United States and Canada.

This time there was also a new factor at work which challenged both communions, namely a growing and bewilderingly varied spiritual search beyond the boundaries of the churches. One of its characteristics was its holistic approach, embracing and affirming the natural as well as the spiritual orders and uniting body, mind, imagination and spirit in the quest for personal fulfilment and wholeness. It also distrusted the established orthodoxies and power structures of the churches, accepting wisdom whatever its source. Freed by the new spirit of openness ushered in by Vatican II, Catholics and Protestants alike, and not least those involved in the retreat movement, were able to respond to this exploration, recognising and embracing what was good in it. So the preached retreat continued, but was joined both by other methods of presenting the *Exercises* and ever more novel ways of leading retreats, as it is the aim of this chapter to show.

The argument of this chapter is presented in three sections. The first considers four catalysts which encouraged the diversification of Anglican practice of retreat between 1962 and 2008 and the changes going on in the Roman Catholic tradition. In the second longer section we begin with an account of the evolution of the ecumenical structures of the retreat movement. We then study the radical overhaul of the practice of Ignatian retreats in which both Catholics and Anglicans shared, and introduce some of the new approaches to retreats adopted by Anglicans. Our spotlight then falls upon the people involved both as retreatants and as retreat givers, also referring to the important and closely related development of the ministry of spiritual direction. This major section ends with a study of the places in which retreats were offered, noting at first the expansion and later the contraction of the provision of retreat houses. The chapter ends with a third, briefer, section which attempts to assess the present state of the movement and the challenges and opportunities which face it at the moment.

Within this account, I have used 1991 as a convenient chronological marker as it was during that year that the inter-denominational National Retreat

Association (NRA – now the Retreat Association, RA), established in 1989, took over from APR the responsibility for co-ordinating the retreat movement in England. Further, as mentioned in Chapter I, my range of sources broadens in this chapter to include oral history, web-sites and my personal recollections. As stated, this will hopefully bring a freshness and immediacy to the research which will contrast with dealing with written sources alone.

So then, what were the catalysts which facilitated the diversification of the Anglican practice of retreat between 1962 and 2008? In this first major section I suggest three; firstly changes in the church and society, secondly the decisions made at Vatican II which stimulated change, and thirdly developments in the ways Roman conductors led retreats in the post-conciliar period.

Part 1. Catalysts for Change.

A. Church and Society in the 1960's

It is a truism to say that the 1960s were a time of great upheaval in Western society, and there are four aspects upon which I want to concentrate. The first is the continuing decline in church membership. After a brief upturn in the fortunes of the churches throughout Europe during the late 1940s through to the mid 1950's, when the Protestant churches in Britain saw their biggest growth since the nineteenth century, the statistics for all the churches, apart from the Catholic community where decline was delayed, went into free-fall (Brown, 2002, p. 170). Legislation at this time on divorce, abortion, homosexuality and later on Sabbath observance seemed to reveal an abandonment of many 'Victorian values,' as did the widely reported moral behaviour of the younger generations – 'promiscuity, drugs, rock music, anarchy and irresponsibility' (Leech, 1997). Opinion polls indicate that orthodox Christian beliefs were increasingly rejected during the succeeding decades, although not perhaps as rapidly as Brown's thesis would suggest (Gill, 2003, p. 250). There is still a cultural Christianity, the imprint of many centuries of Christianity in this country, which leads some, although a decreasing number, to seek the ministrations of the Church for the rites of passage (Billings, 2004, p. 13). However, currently this decline deeply affects the fortunes of the retreat movement, tending to reduce the pool of potential retreatants.

Secondly, in contrast to this disenchantment with the Christian faith, a number of scholars would claim that this was a time of spiritual awakening and of a concern for spiritual experience (Leech, 1997). Some people were exploring the bewildering variety of other forms of spirituality which was available, picking-and-mixing from many traditions. Thousands of young Westerners went to India looking for gurus who might lead them to 'a deeper experience of the mystery of God that they could not find in the church in the West' (Main, 2006, p. 90). Many of these new spiritualities contrasted with the rather cerebral approach of Western Christianity, and holistically united the body, mind and spirit, embracing the physical world and teaching respect and reverence for the created order of which we are part. Further, other faiths were now literally on our door steps as immigrants moved from former colonies, bringing with them their own religions, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and, in the case of the West Indians, their own lively Caribbean expression of Christianity, all of which challenged the staid spirituality of the established churches. Indeed, this period has been characterised as a time of 'the growth of religious diversity,' and this phase is still with us today (Parsons, 1993).

Thirdly, in parallel with these developments, many were looking for personal fulfilment and guidance in coping with the stresses of life through self-understanding and the development of their latent abilities using the insights of modern psychology. Frank Furedi suggests that medical-psychological therapeutic words began to dominate our thinking, so that now 'the language of emotionalism pervades modern culture, the world of politics, the workplace, schools and universities and everyday life.' We are 'traumatised', 'stressed out', suffer from 'low esteem' and 'attention deficits' (Billings, 2004, p. 22). In the 1960's, this led to the rapid rise in the numbers of those seeking counselling and therapy.³³ This has changed the way in which retreats are offered, as I will explain shortly.

Fourthly, in contrast to this concentration on self, this was also the age of a growing concern about social issues, such as the North-South divide, the threat of

³³ For example, the Westminster Pastoral Foundation was founded in 1969 in Westminster Central Hall, moving in 1978 to the house of The Sisters of the Assumption, Kensington, showing the links between the churches and the new psychology (Assumption, 2009).

the use of the atomic bomb, the morality of the Vietnam War and environmental concerns. The study of group dynamics became fashionable, and even bank managers and clergy, I recall, were encouraged to take part in awareness groups, deepening a sense of how we shape and are shaped by the communities to which we belong. This has led to a more communal approach shown in some retreats, as again I will shortly describe.

How did the churches respond to all of this? Many Christians of course carried on in the same old ways, but others embraced the changes. The *Honest to God* debate in 1963 highlighted the theological ferment which was going on, questioning the way in which the Christian meta-narrative had been presented. Bishop John Robinson reported how theologians were challenging the emphasis on God's transcendence, and finding him as 'the ground of our being,' preparing the way for a more contemplative spirituality. Bonhoeffer's call for a Christianity without religion resonated with those who were rebelling against the structures and authoritarianism of the church. Clergy trained as counsellors, and the ministry of spiritual direction blossomed. Eastern methods of devotion were explored not least by some Catholic religious, and holistic approaches to spirituality were embraced. The more alert Christians were growing in social awareness, and were at the forefront of the social protests. The Charismatic movement, mushrooming at this time in both Anglican and Roman Churches, was introducing people to livelier and more informal worship in which the expression of emotion was welcomed, with the promise of life-changing and empowering spiritual experiences. The Liturgical Movement, which had by this time largely succeeded in its aims of making the weekly parish Eucharist the centre of Anglican parish life and was about to see the reform of the Roman liturgy, was introducing ways of worship which emphasised the corporate nature of faith.

To summarise, the decline in church membership and in acceptance of the Christian discourse was accompanied by a search for a meaningful and holistic spirituality beyond the churches. At the same time, a desire for personal wholeness and fulfilment was balanced by a heightened sense of social responsibility and of the corporate nature of faith. Teaching about a transcendent

God who was to be contemplated intellectually from afar was giving way to a longing to experience the immanent God at the centre of our being; and the acceptance of an orthodox faith based upon the authority of Bible or of Church was being replaced by a belief discovered and tested by personal experience. All of this led some to see deficiencies in the ways in which retreats were being offered and to suggest changes, as we will shortly see.

Change was already beginning within the Roman communion itself where bold and well-thought-out developments in the practice of retreats emerged, stimulated and enabled by the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. This great gathering of bishops was called by Pope John in response to an expanding biblical and liturgical awareness within the Roman Church, exemplified by scholars such as Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac and Karl Rahner, men who the previous administration at Rome had forbidden to teach the faith (Hastings, 2005, p. 520). Pope John was also responding to the growing ecumenical movement amongst non-Romans through the World Council of Churches and to the need to come to terms with changes in society and the world as a whole (Hastings, 1991, pp. 3-6). Of the decisions which the Council made, three opened up possibilities which are especially relevant to our present study, and we turn to them now.

B. Some Decisions made at Vatican II

The first of these decisions was the 'Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life,' *Perfectae Caritatis*, which was proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on October 28th 1965. This instructed the religious orders to revisit scripture, church tradition and the founding inspiration and sound tradition of their particular Institute, to discover how they should adapt to the changed conditions of the times. This, Sr. Sandra Schneiders writes, 'opened a way for a genuine dialogue between religious life and the contemporary world' (Schneiders, 1991, p. 158). In particular, it encouraged the Jesuits to continue with the work which they had already begun of looking afresh at the *Exercises*. It also led other orders, such as the Catholic Cenacle Sisters, to reassess their own involvement in retreat ministry with, as we will see, important results.

A second declaration made by the Bishops concerned ecumenical relationships. Up to this point, Rome had sent observers to the World Council of Churches and had stood aloof from other ecumenical initiatives. With the promulgation of the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, on November 21st 1964, a new era dawned in ecumenical relationships (Pawley and Pawley, 1981, p. ix). As Fr. Tom Stransky has written, in this document the church of Rome acknowledged for the first time that members of other communions were not ‘foreigners’ but separated brethren from whom they had much to learn, and without whom the church was incomplete (Stransky, 1991, p. 114). Nothing less than a complete change in the mind-set of Catholics was called for, and from then on part of the task of the Secretariat of Christian Unity was to help the clergy and faithful to break out from the retrenchment mentality of the Catholic Reformation (Tavard, 1991, p. 399). Dialogue with other Christians was now not only possible but was to be encouraged, so that active co-operation with other communions in the retreat movement could blossom.

A third declaration concerned relationships between Rome and people of other faiths. The ‘Declaration on the Relations of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,’ *Nostra Aetate*, was short but significant, acknowledging that they also had insights into the truth and were to be respected and listened to. This encouraged both missionaries and those working amongst the growing immigrant communities in Europe and America to adopt ‘an openness to other faiths and diverse cultures,’ including their ways of prayer. Eastern traditions of meditation were already exerting a widespread influence on Western practice, and now Christian teachers were free to explore them further. This drew attention to the neglected Christian tradition of silent contemplative prayer which had often been restricted to an elite who had progressed far enough in devotion, but, it was now increasingly realised, was to be available to all who were called to follow that way (Hebblethwaite, 1991, p. 241).

Vatican II therefore encouraged a fresh look at the Ignatian Exercises, facilitated ecumenical cooperation, and affirmed those who were already learning from the spiritual wisdom of other faiths. As we will shortly see, these decisions,

in tandem with the spiritual explorations being made beyond the churches, would lead to profound changes into the ways in which retreats were offered.

C. The evolution of Catholic Retreats worldwide, 1962-1991

The Jesuits continued the study of their roots which they had been making since the 1950's, amongst other things re-evaluating their founder's intentions when compiling the *Exercises*. This led Michael Walsh amongst others to make a telling criticism of the whole method of the preached retreat as it was being offered to religious. He pointed out that Ignatius had intended the retreatant to actively 'make' the exercises under the guidance of the retreat leader, but that now he just passively listened to the addresses. The conductor was therefore often valued primarily for his qualities as a preacher, and by his rhetorical and 'story telling' abilities, rather than as a spiritual guide. The time of spiritual withdrawal had become formalised and the essential 'wide range and flexibility of the exercises, the liberty of the children of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the personal relationship during the time of the exercise between the individual exercitant and the retreat director,' had been 'sacrificed to community routine and custom.' Rather than encouraging individual personal communion with God, the annual retreat had come to be looked upon as a time for instruction and exhortation on a variety of religious subjects, and it was 'small wonder then that the Ignatian retreat in our day has sometimes been weighed and found wanting' (Walsh, 1965, p. 4).

He was not alone in this assessment, and the Jesuits, certainly in the English speaking world, began to move from rigidity to flexibility in the ways in which they presented the *Exercises*, with various centres developing new ways of offering them on a one-to-one basis. One of these places was the Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Guelph, Canada where in May 1969 its director, John English, SJ, assisted by John Veltri, organised a Spiritual Exercises Institute. For the first time in North America, and perhaps, Veltri suggests, in the whole world, the 30-day Spiritual Exercises were given in a retreat house by a team of directors who guided a group of 39 women on a one-to-one basis. These sisters,

all of whom were engaged in novice training, went on to influence others, notably diocesan and religious priests, so that by 1971 diocesan priests and male religious were coming to make their own personally directed retreats. From then on, the centre has had an on-going programme of Individually Guided Retreats (IGRs), both 30 days and 8 days in length, and of training courses for new directors (W/English, 2008).

The centre also developed Retreats in Daily Life according to the 19th Annotation to the *Exercises*, in which the saint had suggested that they could be given to suitable candidates over a longer period of time whilst they carried on with their daily routines (Exx. 19). These usually lasted for nine months or more, and were based on weekly meetings between the director and the directee. Obviously the number of individuals who could make the time to share in these was limited, so John English and his team also devised parish-based 'Weeks of Guided Prayer.' These were led by a visiting team of directors who worked typically with three or four retreatants each, with the aim of introducing the participants to Gospel-based meditation and to the experience of spiritual direction (Veltri, n.d. 2, p. 1).

Experimentation was not confined to the Jesuits nor to the Ignatian tradition, and by 1991 a new approach to retreat giving had emerged with the following characteristics. Firstly, it had lost some of its rigid formality. As Margaret Hebblethwaite puts it, 'there was less silence and more group dynamics, less preaching and more sharing' (Hebblethwaite, 1991 p. 241). Secondly, there was now 'greater ecumenical convergence as old devotions peculiar to Catholics were replaced by practices shared by Christians of many denominations' (Hebblethwaite, 1991, p. 242). The contemporary, more informal attitude to personal relationships was mirrored in greater freedom in addressing God, typified by the best seller first published before Vatican II, Michel Quoist's *Prayers of Life* (Quoist, 1963), which bought a breath of fresh air into the prayers of both Catholic and Protestant devotion.

Thirdly, Hebblethwaite notes the new openness to other faiths and diverse cultures (Hebblethwaite, 1991, p. 242). A number of Roman Catholic religious had made special studies of Eastern devotion, including the monks Thomas

Merton, William Johnston, Henri Le Saux, and the English Benedictine Bede Griffiths. In 1978, the Jesuit Anthony de Mello published *Sadhana*, subtitled *Christian Exercises in Eastern Form*, the fruit of his long sojourn in India, accurately described by the publisher as ‘blending psychology, spiritual therapy and the practices of Eastern and Western traditions’ (de Mello, 1984). This had a great appeal at the time and its new prayer exercises were often introduced into retreats. At about the same time, the Benedictine John Main began to teach the use of a mantra as a basis for contemplative prayer, and founded ‘The World Community for Christian Meditation,’ which now has 100,000 members (Main, 2006). His work was paralleled by the Trappist monk Basil Pennington with his ‘Centering Prayer Movement’ and by the teaching of his fellow Trappist Thomas Keating. They saw this ministry as a response to Pope Paul VI’s call in 1971 to the religious communities to help the Church re-discover its contemplative dimension (Pennington, 2001, p. vii).

A fourth change was that the leadership of retreats was no longer the exclusive preserve of religious and of priests. The growing recognition, common through all the major denominations at this time, of the role of the laity in the ministry and mission of the church, led to the development of supplementary ministries, including lay readers at mass and the training of Eucharistic ministers. It therefore seemed natural that religious sisters and secular brothers should now be encouraged to lead retreats and prayer meetings, and eventually lay men and women were also trained for this work (Gaine, 1991, p. 251). For example, until this point the ministry of the Sisters of Congregation of Our Lady of the Cenacle, formed in 1826 in France, had been to run retreat houses. Their formation had always been based upon the *Exercises*, and they now realised that they were sufficiently versed and experienced in Ignatian spirituality to give the retreats themselves, and were encouraged to begin to do this by the Jesuits (Sr. Margaret Petterson, 2006, private communication).

Finally, some religious, both brothers and sisters, who had trained in the new psychological methods of client-led therapy, realised the spiritual significance of the secular world’s interest in self-development and the human potential movement. They began to pioneer workshops exploring various forms

of self exploration such as Journalling, the Jungian based Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator, and the Enneagram, which, it is claimed, had its origin in Sufism, these becoming a familiar part of retreat house programmes (Isichei, 1991, p. 341; Myers, 1992).

The change, facilitated by the new spirit of openness which was born at Vatican II, was remarkable. New ways of offering retreat, both Ignatian and non Ignatian, greater openness towards other churches and to other faiths, the encouraging of women and laity to lead retreats and the introduction of workshops alongside retreat ministry, all these created new possibilities for those engaged in the retreat movement, both Catholic and Protestant. Indeed, Penelope Eckersley comments, looking back on her ten-year term as the organising secretary of APR from 1968–1978, ‘the [Roman] church which [had] seemed the least affected by change had led the way in coping with understanding it and learning from it.’ No longer was the preached retreat the only method being employed (*Vision*, 1979, p. 2).

Some Anglicans were not slow in joining this diversification of a practice pioneered within Catholicism, and we now examine how they responded to the opportunities.

Section 2. The Diversification of the Church of England Practice of Retreat

***D. The development of Ecumenical Structures for the Retreat Movement in England*³⁴**

In 1967, those involved in providing retreats in the Roman Catholic Church of this country, either as owners of retreat houses or as retreat conductors, formed the National Retreat Council (NRC) to coordinate their work. They

(Assumption, 2009).

³⁴ Although I have not inserted all of the individual references, the following section is based extensively on a paper written by John Clifford in 2007 as part of a discernment process undertaken by members of the Retreat Association’s committee to determine the future direction of their work. I have also drawn on the personal memories of myself and of Gillean Russell, interview 30/06/08. For further information about this period, see the articles by Canon Richard Buck, who was the architect of this development, Gillean Russell, the administrator who saw through all the changes, and myself in the 2003 issue of the Annual APR Newsletter.

quickly changed their name to the National Retreat Movement (NRM) and more recently it has been changed again to the Catholic Network for Retreats and Spirituality (CNRS). Almost immediately, contact between the NRC and the APR was established, despite the fact that two bodies differed in the nature of their membership, APR consisting mainly of secular clergy and an even larger number of laypeople, whilst NRC was almost exclusively religious. It was soon proposed that there be a joint secretariat and a joint committee on youth retreats, both of which suggestions were vetoed by Cardinal Heenan. However, he did allow NRC's participation in the publication of *Vision*, which from 1971 onwards carried the programmes for RC houses alongside their Anglican counterparts. Further, the conference organised by APR in 1969 was made ecumenical, to which both Roman Catholic and Methodists were invited.³⁵ Speakers included the Archbishop of Canterbury, and key representatives of the Methodists, the Jesuits, the Benedictines and the Orthodox.

In 1972, at a time when the hope of the visible reunion of the Christian church was still running high, APR changed its constitution to welcome non-Anglicans into membership in the hope that it could become *the* ecumenical retreat organisation. This vision guided its work for the next fifteen years or more, although in practice its membership continued to be mostly Anglican. In 1979 the Methodist Retreat Group (MRG), later known as the Methodist Retreat and Spirituality Network (MR&SN), came into being, largely through the enthusiasm of Mary Holiday, a 'high church' Methodist minister and founder of a small community committed to ecumenism.³⁶ Three years later, MRG were sending two representatives to the *Vision* editorial committee.

A further ecumenical conference was held in 1979. A report of the conference comments on how conservative some Anglicans were compared with their Roman counterparts at that time; Anglican clergy and religious were recognisable by their clerical dress and habits, whereas the Roman priests and

³⁵ Some of the Methodist delegates turned out to be women, which caused consternation as women members of APR also wanted to come along, something which had not been allowed before. In the end, they were permitted to attend, provided that they were actively involved in retreat work. There were of course a number of Catholic sisters present, who had been members of NRC from its beginning.

³⁶ At this point, acronyms begin to multiply like rabbits, and the picture becomes unavoidably complicated.

religious were in lay clothes. Although Anglican religious provided a wealth of experience of retreats, the balance of knowledge and expertise in conducting them lay with the Roman Catholic contingent, which included a large number of Jesuits. The Archbishop of York, the Evangelical Stuart Blanche, had caused some anger by insisting that Biblical exegesis was the only basis for study, meditation and for retreat addresses, and by his criticism of what he regarded as non-biblical methods, dubious spiritualities and Eastern meditation. Similarly, many were not pleased when Fr Martin Smith SSJE in the final sermon had insisted that silence was of the essence of a retreat, and that the movement was just 'pottering around in an ecclesiastical paddling pool unless it realised that it was in the business of introducing silence into the world' (*Vision*, 1980, pp. 2, 3). It seemed to some as if the Church of England wanted to turn the clock back.

In 1984, inspired by the Rev. Richard Buck, a joint working party of APR, NRM and NRG recommended the foundation of a National Retreat Centre (NRC), to be a resource centre for retreat houses, conductors and retreatants, to coordinate training and to respond to enquiries from both press and public. They proposed that a full-time director should be appointed, to serve as the administrator for APR, NRM and MRG. The new centre was inaugurated on November 8th 1986, situated in Liddon House, with Gillean Russell as its executive officer. She was typical of many involved in the retreat movement at the time, having been trained both as a psychotherapist and in Ignatian spirituality.

The idea of retreat was being explored in other denominations at this time, and in 1988, members of the newly formed Baptist Union Retreat Group (BURG) and of the United Reformed Church Silence and Retreat Group (URCS&RG) became observer members of the Management committee of the Retreat Centre. However, APR's dream of embracing all those involved in retreat work within its fold was brought to an end when the younger denominational groups felt it best to keep their own individual identities rather than merge with it. Although it was not fully realised at the time, this reflected what was happening in the wider ecumenical field, where the vision of the eventual integration of all the churches had given way to an agreement to remain separate

but to work as closely together as possible through Churches Together in Britain, which had replaced the British Council of Churches. The retreat groups did however agree to form yet another body to which they could all belong on equal terms whilst keeping their individual identities, and this was named the National Retreat Association (NRA, now simply The Retreat Association, RA). In this way, an umbrella structure was provided through which Anglicans, Catholics and Free Church groups could cooperate in the promotion of retreats, the sharing of experience and the training of conductors, a provision which probably would not have happened apart from the decisions made at Vatican II.

In 1991, APR handed over its non-Anglican responsibilities to the Retreat Association, namely management of the Centre staff and office, the ownership of *Vision* and the organisation of an annual consultation for those running training schemes for spiritual directors. On the advice of those in the publishing industry, from the 1998 edition the name of *The Vision* was changed to *Retreats* to increase its appeal on bookstalls, and income from sales and advertisements has provided a major part of the income of the Retreat Association. The journal remains as the movement's main shop window.

Judith Lampard, a Methodist, took over from Gillean Russell as Organising Secretary of APR and NRA in 1991, and encouraged the NRA to join the Churches Together in England as a Body in Association, giving the retreat movement a voice on the wider ecumenical stage, especially in the area of spirituality (Clifford, 2007, p. 3).

A further diminution of APR's responsibilities happened in the following year, 1992, when it gave up its role in the pastoral care and training of the wardens of Anglican retreat houses, a task it had undertaken since the 1920's, to yet another new group called the 'Anglican Retreat House and Conference Centre Wardens Association' (Archway). This was brought into being by the wardens themselves, with the active encouragement of the APR Council, because of a growing sense of insecurity. A number of houses had recently closed, and others were facing closure due to increased financial pressures, whilst health and safety legislation had multiplied making demands which wardens felt ill-equipped to meet. They often felt that the church as a whole was not giving them

the support which they needed. At first its membership was restricted to Church of England houses so that they could relate to the synodical structures of the church, but it would appear that its membership is now wider, as its web-site describes it as 'An Association of Christian Retreat Houses' (W/Archway 2010). APR continues as a purely Anglican body.

NRA arranged the first of a series of four-yearly conferences at Swanwick in 1992, which contrast with those formerly organised by the APR. Firstly, they were larger, being attended by some 350 or more people. Secondly, those who come were not just retreat conductors, but include retreatants, spiritual directors and directees, retreat house staff and other people who just wanted to find out more. They were in the main over 50 years of age. Thirdly, whereas the addresses at the APR conferences were usually about the art of retreat leadership, this subject was now rarely discussed at the plenary sessions. Rather, the conferences became focused upon the spiritual climate within which retreats were being held, trying to make sense of the present bewildering diversity and the growth of spirituality beyond the churches. Indeed, I felt that a significant number of those attending the 2008 conference were on the fringes of the churches. There was little interest in matters of doctrine or church politics, but rather an honest search for the truth in whatever way it might be revealed.

For some members of the APR Council, this loss of authority was a painful process, being contrary to their earlier vision that the organisation would be open to all within the retreat movement. The association had been thrown back into its original role of promoting retreats within the Church of England and it took some time to adjust. It still organises an annual meeting which helps its members to keep a sense of identity and continuity. Further, it keeps the importance of retreats before those who are in training for ministry, and reported in 2006 that those responsible for ministerial education in the dioceses of Exeter, St. Albans, Canterbury and Peterborough had asked for help in training retreat conductors and spiritual directors. However, membership of the Association and sales of the *Retreats* magazine are now in decline (RA Newsletter, 2006, p. 2)

The appointment of Paddy Lane as the organising secretary of NRA and of APR in 1994 gave the retreat movement a warm, wise and supportive figure-

head, a post from which she retired in 2008. Under her leadership, another important development occurred, reflecting significant changes in the movement. Until 2001, in order to become a member of the Association, one had first to join a denominational group. In that year, at the request of the increasing numbers of retreat houses run by ecumenical teams and of retreatants who did not have a particular denominational allegiance, it was opened to Affiliates, who, whether as individuals or institutions, can join the association directly (*Retreats*, 2002, p. 2).³⁷

These new structures, rather baffling to the uninitiated, enabled an easy flow of ideas and experience between those leading retreats, encouraging the development of new ways of offering retreats in all the denominations of this country, including the Roman Catholics. We now return to the 1970's to investigate the practices which evolved, beginning with the Ignatian tradition, an area in which cooperation between Anglicans and Catholics has been particularly strong.

E. Practice I: The Development of Ignatian Retreats in England

A key person in the renewal of Ignatian practice in England was the Jesuit Gerard Hughes, who has had a big influence upon Anglicans both personally and as a writer. He is perhaps best known for his book *God of Surprises*, first published in 1985, which, it has been claimed, was on the bedside table of every Anglican bishop (W/Hughes, 1985). In a practical way, it introduced a wide public to the principles of Ignatian spiritual direction by encouraging many to learn to listen to their deepest desires. He was appointed in 1979 by the Jesuits as Director of St Beuno's centre in North Wales with the brief of changing it from being their house for novices into a Centre of Jesuit Spirituality. Quoting Fr Jerome Nadal, a sixteenth-century contemporary of St Ignatius, he stated that it was his intention to make it a place of service to all, 'Catholics, Protestants and Pagans.' He initiated a three-month training course 'which would offer people an experience of making the full Spiritual Exercises

³⁷ The *Retreats* magazine has succeeded *Vision* and is published by the Retreat Association from 1991 onwards.

over thirty days, and then of learning and practising ways and means of adapting the *Exercises* so that they could be made more accessible to all' (Hughes, 2008). The programme of retreats and training, which is modelled on John English's programme at Guelph, continues with modifications to this day. Training courses and IGRs open to all denominations were also started at about this time at Loyola Hall near Liverpool, which the Jesuits had used as a retreat house in 1923, and at Campion House, Osterley, West London.

Soon Anglican religious, clergy and laity began to go to the Jesuits to experience an IGR for themselves, and they were always made very welcome. For example, Canon Donald Nicholson, who was at this time the Superior of the Society of Retreat Conductors and who had for some time been training others in giving the *Exercises* through the preached retreat, made a 30 day retreat in the Autumn of 1978 under the guidance of Fr Brian Wall SJ, and commended the experience. Two years later two other members of the Society, John Arrowsmith and John Andrews made shorter IGRs at St Beuno's.³⁸ They came back convinced of the effectiveness of this 'new' method, and warmly recommended it to others.

Having experienced an IGR, people wanted to be trained in giving the *Exercises* but not all could afford the cost or spare the time to go to St Beuno's. So in the Autumn of 1981, under the auspices of APR, the Cenacle Sister Elisabeth Smyth and the Anglican Christopher Lowe CR initiated a two year training programme. The teaching methods which they used reflected the current holistic understanding that a retreat involved the whole person rather than being mainly cerebral. Art, music, journalling and other ways of reflecting upon one's faith-journey were all part of the training (*Vision*, 1982, p. 4-5). Along with members of other denominations, this course was attended by Anglican clergy, retreat house wardens, religious and laity. It was later extended to three years and continues today under the leadership of Andrew Walker of SRC.

A week-long course in leading IGRs was held in April 1982 at the Royal Foundation of St Katherine, Stepney, at that time run by Christopher Lowe and

³⁸ SRC Archives Box3/CM//Feb, 1978; CB/SB1/Report of Study Week 1981; CB/SB1/Nicholson's paper *Reality is here*. At this time, SRC consisted of some thirty priests, mainly Anglo-Catholic, some of whom never moved on from the preached retreat.

other members of the Community of the Resurrection. Gerard Hughes was the trainer, and it was attended by five members of SRC and a number of Anglican religious.³⁹ In 1985, a further ecumenical opportunity for training in the Ignatian tradition was established by Hughes together with Bishop Graham Chadwick, who had recently returned from South Africa, and Sister Mary Rose Fitzsimmons. This became an annual ten-day workshop in the Ignatian tradition, known as the Llysfas Spirituality Workshops after the Welsh agricultural college where the first fifteen of them were held. More concentrated and less demanding in terms of time-commitment than other courses, and with an emphasis upon the development of listening skills and discernment, it continues to equip and encourage those who give regular spiritual direction, or who lead 19th annotation retreats and parish weeks of guided prayer (Gregory, 2007, pp. 19, 21). Yet another course was offered at the newly established Institute of Spirituality at Heythrop College London, led by the Jesuits David Lonsdale and Philip Sheldrake from 1984 onwards, with the initial purpose of giving in-service training to those already involved in Ignatian retreat leadership. Training was given over a two-year period, and was typical of initiatives being taken by the Roman Catholics and made available to all.

The first IGR to be offered in an Anglican House was in 1982 at St Columba's House, Woking, led by Sister Winifred Morley (Cenacle), Fr John Shand (RC) and the Revd David Platt. There were two more that year at the Chelmsford Diocesan House of Retreat, Pleshey, the warden of which, Canon Peter Morris, was a member of the London-based two-year training course. These were led by mixed RC and Anglican teams (*Vision*, 1982, pp. 4, 15, 22). In October of the following year, an eight-day IGR was held at Stacklands attended by four ladies and ten priests, six of whom were members of SRC. This was led by three Jesuits, Frs. Paul Kennedy, Anthony Nye, and Philip Sheldrake.⁴⁰ The following year, a Jesuit supervised an SRC team, and in later years Society members gave IGRs on a regular basis.

From then on, IGRs became a regular part of Anglican retreat house programmes, often at first with joint RC/Anglican teams, but later led by

³⁹ SRC Archives CB/SB1.

⁴⁰ SRC Archives Box5/AGM/1983.

Anglicans alone as more leaders were trained. Following Roman Catholic practice, these included sisters from various orders including Clewer and OHP as well as laity. It was very rarely that the full thirty-day retreat was given in Anglican Houses which did not have the facilities for such long periods of residence. They were often of eight days duration, which was long enough to experience the *Exercises* in some depth. Perhaps more frequently they lasted from a Monday evening to a Friday morning, when either one 'week' of the *Exercises* was given or the director guided the directees as seemed most appropriate for their current spiritual state.

Soon, retreats in daily life, in which the *Exercises* were carried out in the course of one's daily routine, were being offered by and for Anglicans, and parish weeks of guided prayer were also run in many parts of the country. For example, a group who had trained at the Lysfasi Workshops offered these courses in the Lichfield Diocese with some success. Anglicans also gave 19th Annotation retreats, sometimes using as a guide the materials developed at Guelph.

Anglicans were involved from the beginning in a programme which was developed by a Cenacle Sister, Winifred Morley, in 1981 in response to a request from a parish in Burnham to help them discover the riches of Scripture. Always led by two people and ecumenical in character, the nine-week experience is known as 'Open Door Retreats,' and was designed for groups of 12 to 15 people. Direction was not given on a one-to-one basis, but on a group-basis during a weekly meeting of all the retreatants which lasted for two hours. Although this had the disadvantage that not everyone moved at the pace of the group as a whole, Sister Winifred says that they usually caught up (Morley, 1992). For many, this was their first experience of Ignatian methods and led them on to deeper things.

An Anglican variation of this method was developed by Gordon Jeff and Dorothy Nicholson arising out of their work with the training of spiritual directors in the Southwark Diocese. Beginning in 1984, they organised parish weeks aimed at helping members of a congregation to talk about their faith so deepening their fellowship, and also to introduce participants to the experience of

personal spiritual direction. Each day course members met individually with their personal director who helped them to discern God in their daily lives. They also shared in corporate devotional exercises which introduced different ways of praying, and were followed by a discussion of some issue of life and faith (Jeff and Nicholson, 1992).

Today, Ignatian spirituality remains at the core of the Anglican retreat tradition, but now in the newer forms which are more in keeping with St Ignatius' original intentions. However, there seems to have been after Vatican II amongst both Roman Catholics and Anglicans a desire to revisit the older medieval pre-reformation spiritualities, so retreats were arranged which explored the Benedictine and Celtic traditions and also contemplative prayer. It is with these that we begin the next section.

F. Practice II: Anglican Non- Ignatian Retreats

1. Exploring different spiritualities

Benedictine retreats, in the sense of going to stay with a religious community and joining as far as possible in their life, had long been part of the Anglican retreat tradition, and in the post-Vatican II period came to be increasingly valued. Further, the Benedictine way of life, with its emphasis on community, on stability of place and on the ideal of a balanced life of worship, study and work, seemed to be particularly attractive to some in the individualistic and restless 1970's. So Esther de Waal amongst others began to organise 'Benedictine Experience' weeks, often using diocesan retreat houses as venues. She had become aware of the tradition's values while her husband was Dean of Canterbury Cathedral, itself a Benedictine foundation. The retreatants came together to form a temporary Benedictine community, sharing in the daily offices, studying the Rule of St Benedict and its relevance to daily life, and getting down to some hard physical work, perhaps gardening or repairing furniture. She later published the teaching given during these weeks in her book *Seeking God; the Way of St Benedict* (de Waal, 1984). In particular, she and others returned to the way of meditating on the Bible known as *lectio divina*, which had been the accepted way of reading scripture before the Reformation, as

a welcome alternative to the apparent complexities of Ignatian meditation. At the time of writing, Anglicans are finding their way to Worth and other Catholic Benedictine houses to explore their way of life at first hand.

Another ancient tradition which seemed to resonate with the current concerns of those both within and beyond the Church was Celtic spirituality, which has a sense of the sacredness of particular places and of the immanence of the divine in the whole of the natural world. It passes on a distinctive heritage of prayers linked directly with the ordinary occasions of daily life and of poems celebrating the power, beauty and mystery of nature, all echoing the growing concern with ecology. Its practice of having a 'soul friend' confirmed the growing use of spiritual direction and its perceived minimal ecclesiastical structures were welcomed by those disillusioned with the church.⁴¹ So anything 'Celtic' attracted a ready clientele. Mary Lister, an Anglican deacon, recalls a Celtic retreat which was held on Bardsey Island, an old monastic site. She remembers the silence, 'only the singing of the seals,' and found it to be 'a thinner place than Iona.' It was led by Esther de Waal and Donald Allchin. (Interview with Mary Lister, 09/08/08). David Adam, who was the incumbent at Lindisfarne for many years and has written many books of Celtic-style prayers and poems, also developed retreats in this tradition. Retreats are still held regularly on Holy Island, often using the facilities of the parish church. Some are run by the ecumenical Marygate Trust founded in 1972 by the then Rector of the parish and a Methodist local preacher (*Vision*, June 1972 p. 5). They have been joined more recently by the ecumenical Community of Hilda and Aidan whose house on the Island can take a small number of retreatants (W/Hilda, 2009). Although beyond the remit of this thesis, it is worth noting the influence of the Church of Scotland Iona Community in developing an awareness of Celtic spirituality, and their worship material has been frequently used in Anglican retreat houses and elsewhere.

Benedictine and Celtic retreats are not distinctively Anglican, and Roman Catholic houses devised similar events which I have already mentioned. They

⁴¹ However, many scholars would question whether or not a distinctive Celtic church ever existed; it may well have been just one of the many forms adopted by the Christian church in its early years (O'Loughlin, 2005).

have also offered contemplative prayer retreats although sometimes they follow distinct paths. This is not so much a separate spiritual tradition as an important but often neglected component of all ways of prayer, and its merits a section on its own.

2. Contemplative Retreats

Just as a growing interest in Benedictine and Celtic spiritualities reflected the concerns of the times, so did the growing interest in contemplative prayer, which we have already mentioned in Chapter 3. This theme was picked up in the report of the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops 1968, who had agreed that one of the most important ways of renewing the Church in faith was through a growth in prayer and contemplation. It was important therefore that church people learn to keep still and listen to God, so fostering each person's capacity for contemplation (Slade, 1975, p. 9).

Some who were attracted to this prayer of quiet went to stay with communities of contemplative nuns to enter into their silence. So Dorothy Nicholson recalls going to stay at West Malling, where the only person you met was the guest sister. She remembers joining them for their services and the Eucharist, and says that it was a very powerful place with a deep silence. (Interview with Dorothy Nicholson 07/10/08).

In 1972, Fr H. E. W. Slade SSJE used his experience of working alongside Hindus in India and in response to the call from Lambeth, opened 'The Anchorhold' in Hayward's Heath, where a small community was formed to practice and teach contemplative prayer. They used Yoga techniques of breathing and physical posture to develop the concentration of the mind and to reach the heart 'where God meets man.' (*Vision*, June 1972, p. 6). The experience at 'The Anchorhold' was written up and published in 1975, but the experiment seems to have been short-lived (Slade, 1975). However, Dorothy Nicholson reports that in her experience such methods do not work today, but that once again people want something to think about (Interview 07/10/08).

A related technique was taught by the Roman Catholic Cenacle Sisters and adopted by many Anglican conductors. Retreatants were encouraged to go out on

an ‘awareness walk’, or a ‘Walk of Thanksgiving,’ walking slowly through the countryside concentrating on each sense one-by-one - ‘What can I hear? What can I see? What can I smell?...’ - which leads to a deeper awareness of one’s surroundings and often of the presence of God within it all. These methods fit in with the holistic approach to devotion.

As well as looking to current Eastern practice for guidance, people looked back to the Medieval School of English Mystics who had been championed by Evelyn Underhill in the early years of the century. Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and Mother Julian of Norwich are now more widely read than they have ever been, and retreats and workshops based on their teaching are very popular.

The development of contemplative prayer in the parishes was encouraged by the formation in 1973 of what came to be known as ‘The Julian Meetings.’ Their founder was Hilary Wakeman, at that time an Anglican laywoman but later ordained, and a news reporter by profession.⁴² She had read that there was a meditative tradition within the Christian church, but sadly did not find it amongst her parochial clergy. She established a loose structure of local groups in which people met together to share simple teaching about contemplative prayer and to practice it. It was called ‘The Julian Meetings’ because 1973 was the anniversary of Mother Julian’s Revelations and because, as she was pre-reformation, all churches could own her. Many people who joined said that they had always really prayed like this, and had never found wordy prayer helpful, and were reassured to know that they were not mad. Although intended to be ecumenical, in practice its members were mostly Anglicans.⁴³ For many years, the Julian Meetings would have an annual retreat, which at their peak drew over 200 people

⁴² This description of the JMs is based upon an interview with the Revd Graham Johnson who was involved from the beginning, Date of interview 06/10/08.

⁴³ It is illuminating to compare JM with John Main’s World Community for Christian Meditation. They are both ecumenical and both have branches in many parts of the Western world although WCCM is by far the largest body. WCCM has John Main and his successor Laurence Freeman as identified leaders, treated as a Guru, and their group meetings often begin by playing a recording of one of their addresses. It is also strongly conscious of its Benedictine roots, and teaches just one way of contemplative prayer, namely the use of the mantra. JM deliberately have no strong leader, has no strong roots although remains largely Anglican, and does not teach any one method. This is a strength because it recognises that there are many ways of stilling the mind which will suit different people. It is a weakness because it is important to stay with one technique for some time to see if it does become one’s own, and also it is easy for groups to lose their vision.

at a time, but now, although the movement is still strong and healthy, Deidre Morris, the present National Co-ordinator, informs me that that the last retreat was held in 2002 (letter 29/08/08). The groups have helped to keep the idea of contemplative prayer alive, and also have provided a pool of potential retreatants⁴⁴.

In practice, the number of Anglican retreats which have been billed as 'contemplative' is probably small. However, many more retreats have contemplative elements both in the subjects covered in the addresses and in use of quietening exercises at the beginning of them. Contemplative techniques are taught routinely during Ignatian retreats. We will return to this subject when we consider some individual retreat leaders.

3. Themed Retreats

Some of the holistic approaches to contemplative prayer led naturally to the use of the creative arts as ways into silence and meditation, an approach which was developed from the 1970's onwards by Roman Catholic retreat-givers. By 2002, the Jesuit retreat centre at Campion House in Osterley, West London, was regularly announcing a series of retreats based upon the *Exercises* called 'touching God with my finger tips' which used dance, clay-modelling and painting as ways of responding to the gospel meditations (*Retreats*, 2002, p 37). Michael Barrow SJ, who was involved in these retreats, explains the rationale behind them:

It is by getting absorbed in material things such as paint or clay, or physical movement such as dance, that we come out of our heads and get in touch with our hidden selves, our real selves. By handling natural matter or by looking at nature we can be moved beyond the external world into something far deeper, and that is where we find God (*Retreats*, 2006, p. 11).

Unfortunately, the House is now closed.

In an Anglican setting, Sister Mary Anne and Fr Peter Land led a parish retreat in 1974, the time-table for which looked fairly normal, including

⁴⁴ What would a retreat in the tradition of Mother Julian look like? Sister Elizabeth Obbard, OCarm., who is a Carmelite Solitary attached to Aylesford Priory, Kent, (RC), suggests that it would include time for solitary prayer and contemplation, meditation on passages from Julian's *Revelations*, and pondering on Julian's understanding of God as a non-judgemental God of total compassion, and how that affects our own attitude to others (*Retreats*, 2009, p.14).

addresses which followed themes from creation to redemption. However, the response to these great truths was not so much to be thought as experienced, and so the leaders provided materials with creative potential – newspapers, paints, rolls of wallpaper, felt tips, pictures, glue and a life size cross – all of which leaders and retreatants together used to enter into the themes. They reported that despite the activity, the silence was all pervasive (*Vision*, January 1975, p. 6). It is now quite normal to have such material available during retreats and quiet days.

In 1973, Canon Charles Shells with his wife Anne led the first Painting and Prayer retreat at Llangasty retreat house in the Brecon Beacons. It was said of one of their early retreats that ‘it was a good introduction [for] those people who despite living by Christian doctrines, fight shy of the Church through shyness, prejudice or fear of becoming involved’ (*Vision*, 1977, p. 9). Eventually those who participated in these events formed the ecumenical Creative Arts Retreat Movement (CARM) to develop this approach, and now, as well as painting and prayer, they offer retreats based upon calligraphy, creative writing, drama, embroidery, music, photography and poetry. Each retreat is staffed by a chaplain who is responsible for worship and some Christian input, and a tutor skilled in the particular art form being used. Half of each retreat day, from 9.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m., is spent in creative activity and then silence is kept over-night. These retreats have over the years proved to be very popular, and now more than twenty retreat houses in the country and abroad are used by the organisation which has some 500 members (w/Carm, 2009). One criticism of their approach is that sometimes the events seem to be just summer schools with prayer thrown in, an impression confirmed by the exhibition of work which is arranged on the final evening. However, under careful leadership, those who come find peace and refreshment, time for reflection, and the affirmation and renewing of faith.⁴⁵

Robert Cooper’s description of a photography retreat which he had organised and led in 2004 at Marygate House on Lindisfarne, reveals the potential of using the creative arts. He says that the primary purpose of the retreat was not to take photographs, but ‘to behold,’ to open eyes and hearts to this

⁴⁵ The ‘Art and Spirituality Network’ is an interfaith group of professional artists and counsellors who arrange retreats and day workshops on a more professional level (Art, 2011).

particular place; in short the purpose was 'Contemplation, Seeing, Fierce and Intense,' and the island itself was the teacher. The retreatants were encouraged to allow themselves to be surprised, and when they opened the shutters of their cameras, they were recording not just the scene, but also how their hearts had been exposed in the process. Cooper goes on to say that such seeing can only happen when we slow ourselves down, and claims that photography has the potential to help us to live in the present moment and to learn 'to open our eyes, and to perceive God where we are' (*Retreats*, 2005, pp. 5-7).

Finding the reality of God through nature has long been a familiar spiritual theme, and there are those people for whom a solitary walk, perhaps with their dog, becomes a time of prayer. I began to experiment with walking retreats whilst at Pleshey in the late 1980's, and these are now being offered by a number of houses. Again, the danger is that these become merely a walking holiday with prayer thrown in, but Dorothy Nicholson and her husband Roy have evolved a format which avoids this. During a recent retreat for those in ministry, they explored Exmoor on three successive days, walking in silence. Each day began with a short liturgy, and then retreatants were encouraged to use what they experienced on the walks as grist to the mill of their personal reflection. On their return to the retreat house the group members shared what had struck them, and then spent the evening talking in the bar, ending with Compline. They were encouraged to write, to make a mandala, or to paint in order to get in touch with their deepest reactions (Interview with Dorothy Nicholson 07/10/08).

Different traditions, contemplative prayer and themed retreats are some of the ways in which the Anglican tradition of retreat has been enriched since 1962. The former Organising Secretary of APR Sr Joanna Baldwin summed up the changes which took place in Anglican retreats after Vatican II as follows:

Many people continue to value the addresses of a conducted retreat, some [of whom] appreciate the inclusion of specific ways to relax tension and deepen awareness. But increasingly, it is the specialised retreat in which the retreatant is able to make the greatest possible use of the time he or she can give, that is being sought out...music, poetry, yoga, simple exploration of the qualities of silence, or a personally given IGR (*Vision*, 1985, p. 1).

As to the present balance between different types of retreat, an analysis of retreats listed in the 2008 edition of *Retreats* appears to show that during that year some 44 Anglican retreat houses proposed to host around 43 preached retreats, 38 themed retreats, 21 IGRs, 16 events which are based upon the contemplative approach, 15 opportunities to explore different spiritual traditions, and 14 workshops. From the information published, it is difficult to predict how much silence will be included in any particular event. Further, these categorisations are not firm – a preached retreat may well have elements of both contemplative and creativity retreats, and the programme for a Benedictine retreat may differ little from that for a preached retreat. Some retreats are still Ignatian and silent, but many others are not, and this diversity may be found in both Anglican and Roman Catholic practices which have developed in similar ways.

If these then are some of the current practices being employed by retreat conductors, who are the retreatants?

G. Who comes on retreats?

In the main, the clientele of Roman Catholic and Church of England retreats, viz. religious, clergy and middle class ladies, has changed little; but I will investigate different categories further.

1. Clergy Retreats

In the Roman church, parish priests are still expected to make a regular retreat, although I understand from conversations with some of them that these are often seen as much as a welcome social occasion as a time of devotion. There is no such obligation placed upon Anglican clergy, who are however still advised that, along with reading, study, conferences, and training days, the priest should make ‘an annual individually guided, preached or themed retreat’ (Lawson, 2005, p. 47). One noticeable change during the period covered by this chapter is that far fewer retreats are arranged specifically for clergy these days. This may well reflect the decrease in the numbers in full time ministry, and of these the

percentage who are Anglo-Catholics, for whom an annual retreat was more likely to be part of their rule of life, has diminished. I have no information on whether or not women priests are more likely to make their retreat than men. A further factor however is the growth of in-service training in which clergy are encouraged to participate, using up some of the limited time and money available for periods away from the parish. Whilst usually the diocese gives each priest a training grant to be used to pay for courses of their choice, practice differs as to whether or not this can be spent on a retreat. A final reason for the decline is that the lines which formerly distinguished the ordained from the laity have blurred, and some priests now prefer to join in themed and other styles of retreat alongside their lay colleagues. The Society of Mary and Martha at Sheldon in Devon, which was established in 1991, specialises in the care of those in ministry, providing a variety of retreats, facilities for extended private retreats, as well as opportunities for intensive personal review in what they call a '12,000 mile service,' and their ministry is highly valued (w/Sheldon 2009).

Anglican candidates for the diaconate or the priesthood are still expected to join in a retreat immediately before the ordination. The time-table for a recent ordination retreat for deacons and priests held in the Leicester Diocese, kindly sent to me by the Rev. Sue Field, Director of Ordinands, is very little different from those in which I took part over 50 years ago, or even the practice of 100 years ago, although the atmosphere will be more relaxed than it was. The format is basically that of a silent preached retreat, with rehearsals for the service take place at the beginning and interviews with the bishop towards the end. The conductor, appointed by the bishop, also preaches at the ordination. The time apart is an opportunity for personal reflection and commitment and helps to bind that group of ordinands together through their shared experience. However, for some the exercise becomes problematic as it is an unfamiliar experience and they are separated from their families at what is for them a time of transition and stress (Witcombe, 2005, p. 51).

Further, the value of any particular ordination retreat will depend upon the chemistry between the conductor and the individual candidate. A recent ordinand, a regular retreat-goer, found the silence of her deacon's retreat to be

too interrupted to be of great value, but warmed to the conductor of her priest's retreat, finding his addresses on four different spiritual traditions illuminating and inspiring, while he really listened to her during the interview which she had with him (Interview with Carolyn Chadwick 17/03/2009). The ordination retreat is often appreciated at the time and it remains one of the retreat movement's important gifts to Anglican practice. However, it rarely leads people to value the practice of spiritual withdrawal as an ongoing resource for the rest of their ministry, perhaps being seen as part of a rite of passage not to be repeated.

2. Young People

Over the years there have been many attempts to arrange retreats for young people and in the Anglican church, the APR listing of retreats for January 1934 included 34 such events (APR, 1934). In some parishes and some public schools it is still the practice to take confirmation candidates away on retreat before the great day. For example, Oundle School begin their ten week confirmation course with an away-day at Launde Abbey, and then ten days before the service candidates return there for an overnight retreat, when the candidates make their final decision on whether to be confirmed or not (w/Oundle, 2009).

One of the most sustained efforts to develop youth retreats was made by the Anglican Young People's Association (AYPA), whose work just falls into the period of this chapter. The Revd Kenneth Pickett brought his Canadian experience over to this country about the time of the Second World War, and retreats became one of the organisation's chief methods of working until its demise in the 1970's. Venues chosen for them were historic and spiritual places, such as Glastonbury, Walsingham and later Launde Abbey. Care was taken to invite leaders who related to young people. Both Geoffrey Beaumont and Patrick Appleford led retreats with a musical focus. Other leaders included Mervyn Stockwood, Hugh Montifiore, Graham Leonard, Robin Woods, John Waller and Jim Packer, all of whom were later to become bishops, representing a wide spectrum of churchmanship. About six retreats were held in a year, which were mostly over-subscribed. The Retreats were mainly silent with the Daily Offices and the Eucharist as an essential part of the pattern and their duration varied from a week end to a full week. A former national President told me that many

vocations were found in AYPAs retreats and that the memories are lasting and life long (email from Dr Peter Holmes, received 22/03/09). By the 1980's, young people were more likely to be taken on retreat to Iona or Taizé than to an Anglican house in this country (conversation with Dr Wayne Morris 11/05/09).

3. Franciscan Tertiaries.

As with similar groups in the Roman church, there are a number of Anglican bodies existing for mutual spiritual support and Christian service who include retreats as part of their suggested rule of life. For example, retreats arranged at a parish or diocesan level have long been part of the life of the Mothers Union, although few members attend.

Periods of withdrawal are especially important part in the life of the Franciscan Tertiaries, who were founded in 1936 and now number some 1,000 members in this country. Advice on their suggested personal rule of life includes this clause 'Tertiaries make a Retreat each year to allow God to develop their awareness of Him and His calling of them.' Members of the Order are free to make their retreats anywhere, but many would join in retreats that are arranged specifically for them. Some 14 such retreats were planned for 2009, most of which were silent and traditional. They were usually led by a friar, or by a sister of the second order, or by a tertiary priest or lay person with an understanding of the Franciscan way of life. Often the Franciscan Office Book is used as the basis of the worship, and the themes of the addresses will be focused on matters of especial concern to tertiaries (w/Franciscans, 2009). Three longstanding tertiaries, Harold Smith, his wife Evelyn and their friend Shirley Lee, recalled for me retreats they had attended at the house of the Franciscan Poor Clares, an enclosed order based at Freeland, near Oxford. They appreciated the atmosphere of the place where there were no distractions or attractions to impinge on a silence which 'draws you out of the world.' They also valued the Franciscan austerity, although the food was adequate, and sharing with the sisters in their daily office. (Interview with Harold Smith 18/11/08).

In providing retreat leaders and venues for retreatants to use, and in witnessing to the value of times of withdrawal in ordinary Christian lives, the contribution of the Anglican Franciscan order to the retreat movement has been

great, as with their Roman Catholic contemporaries. More recently, the retreat tradition has been enriched by contributions from the Evangelical and Charismatic wings of the church, and it is worth looking at these in some detail.

4. Evangelicals and Charismatics

As we have seen in previous chapters, there had always been some Evangelicals who had embraced the practice of retreat, and a group of them came together in November 1972 to make it more widely available. At that time a number of Christians were experimenting with communal living, and some Evangelicals came to Hackney, East London, to live together so that they could witness to the grace of God for the people of that area, and to provide retreats and the opportunity for quiet, calling themselves 'The Community of the Love of God.' Their leader, John Pearce, wrote a booklet in 1988 in which he set out what he considered to be the characteristics of an Evangelical retreat. The first was the acknowledgement of the priority of scripture as authoritative and inspired, and its ability to speak in a way relevant to daily life. Addresses were therefore based upon the careful exposition of scripture, not on the whim of the conductor. Secondly, the themes of these addresses followed the classic pattern moving from the holiness of God, to the fact of our sins, followed by the joyful reminder of our forgiveness through the cross, and finally the new empowering by the Holy Spirit to serve the Lord in the world.⁴⁶ Thirdly the worship would be simple and unadorned, using a Communion service which expresses a Biblical, as understood by Evangelical, understanding of the cross and the Lord's Supper. Lastly, there was the opportunity for free informal extempore prayer, perhaps in the lounge rather than the chapel. This community has continued offering retreats up to the present day (Pearce, 1988, p. 23).

A number of Evangelicals made the *Exercises* for themselves. One, Ann Netherwood, penned 'a personal account of what an abridged version looked like to one Protestant who encountered it' (Netherwood, 1990, p. 3). It is in the 'personal testimony' tradition of writing, giving more account of her life story than of the retreat itself, although she had been encouraged to look back on her

⁴⁶ This pattern is in fact closely followed in the Ignatian Exercises.

faith journey during the retreat. She would no doubt agree with Rob James who suggests that the *Exercises* fit in well with an evangelical perspective (James, 2006). They are biblically based, they deal with the personal relationship with God, and they are open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Charismatics were to be found amongst Evangelicals and also among Anglo-Catholics to whom the idea of retreat was already familiar. We read of a charismatic retreat for the High Church parish of St Saviours, St Albans, led by their parish priest, who may well have followed the example of his Roman Catholic brethren, amongst whom the renewal movement was strong. Only the first talk had been prepared and for the rest the group had followed the leading of the Holy Spirit. The later addresses were given by group members sharing the thoughts and ideas which were in their heads, 'not gibberish or hysteria, but something worthwhile and understood by everyone'. Silence was kept in between the sessions, not in obedience to a rule but as the group was led (Vision, July 1973, p. 1). Later Charismatic retreats often emphasised the healing ministry.

An influential person with the Evangelicals was Joyce Huggett, the wife of the rector of the city centre parish of St Nicholas in Nottingham where Charismatic renewal was experienced in the 1970's. She herself was led on a spiritual journey which drew together her Evangelical faithfulness to the Word of God, her experience of Charismatic renewal, and 'the contemplative life, with its emphasis on encountering God and being encountered by him, rather than talking about God or merely meditating on thoughts about him'. Of great importance in her spiritual search were the Trappist monks at Mount St Bernard's Abbey in Leicestershire and the Anglican Whitby Sisters in Yorkshire, who helped her to discover the value of three or four day retreats. In the parish she initiated a silent prayer group for whom she organised quiet days and later weekend retreats. The programme for these weekends incorporated charismatic worship, stillness (often in darkness around a lighted candle), teaching, mutual ministry, liturgical prayer and intercession (Huggett, 1983, pp. 43, 186, 197). She gave testimony to her experiences in a book called *Listening to God* which helped to make these 'high church' practices acceptable to her fellow Evangelicals. She soon became much

in demand on the conference circuit, and was also widely used as a retreat conductor. Sister Mary Pat of the Community of the Holy Name, who knew her well, says that Joyce was highly valued in this role because 'she had a woman's view and was able to intuit the point which each individual in the group had reached' (private conversation, 11/03/09).

A book on retreats was published in 1987 by one of the leading Evangelical publishers. Its author was Brother Ramon SSF, who had found faith as an Evangelical, had shared in Charismatic renewal, then became a Franciscan friar, and who, by the time he wrote the book, was living as a hermit. He was concerned about the frenetic activity which accompanied much of the evangelism, administration and religious service of the time, allowing no time for taking stock, warning that,

Evangelism without spiritual roots, not sustained by a life of prayer, becomes verbosity. Dogmatic theology without the enthusiasm, the excitement and the experience of a baptism in the Holy Spirit, becomes an arid and a boring scholasticism.

To peace-makers and those engaged in protest against injustice and inequalities, he warns that they were suffering from a form of compassion fatigue, and then explained,

Life in God is meant to be an experienced life, leading to an awareness of the divine presence as well as the divine absence. Retreat opens out into that experiential dimension in which one learns not only with the mind, but also in the heart, the powerful meaning of the Gospel of death and resurrection (Ramon, 1987, pp. 7, 9).

In many ways, much of what he writes is very traditional. He gives an extended Bible study showing how the principle of retreat is embedded in Holy Scripture, and how it was lived out by the desert fathers, as had Richard Benson a hundred years before. He commends the practice as a way of experiencing traditions of prayer different to one's own, and talks of the value of going to a place 'where prayer has been valid.' Perhaps most valuable is his advice, clearly growing out of his experience of living as a hermit, on how best to make a seven day personal individual retreat. He suggests a daily timetable which balances times of prayer with the necessary practical details of looking after oneself, physical exercise and

relaxation, and recommends basing the retreat upon sections of the *Exercises* (Ramon, 1987, chaps. 2, 3, pp. 88, 125, 224).

In the late 1980's I saw people coming to Pleshey to make retreats who had come to faith in lively and rather noisy Charismatic/Evangelical parishes, but who were now feeling the need for a quieter and more contemplative approach. Today there are those who would still call themselves 'Evangelicals' but who have moved on beyond the rather narrow certainties and absoluteness of much Evangelical theology to embrace the sense of spirituality and mystery expressed in the symbolic and contemplative traditions of the Christian church (Tomlinson, 1995, p. 10). To these 'post-Evangelicals' the idea of retreat and of silent prayer is welcome. Paula Hollingsworth, who would place herself in this category, spoke to me of the 'Green Belt' events, where the worship is often based on Taizé style repetitive chants, and uses images and icons and other contemplative techniques. She suggested that Evangelicals had in the past avoided retreats because they tended to distrust any event, including those in diocesan retreat houses, which was not organised by their fellow Evangelicals. She also suggested that many of them were extroverts, busy people, who would not readily spend time in silence and apparent inactivity (Interview 10/09/08).

Clearly some Evangelicals and Charismatics have now joined the Anglo-Catholics in coming regularly on retreat, and a number of them have embraced the allied ministry of spiritual direction which has become much more available since the 1960's and which we study in the following section.

H. Retreats and Spiritual Direction

In both the Roman and Anglican communions there is a close link between the practice of retreat and the ministry of spiritual direction, an association which, in the Church of England, stretches from Pusey himself through Evelyn Underhill to Martin Israel. Paddy Lane said that some people begin looking for a director because of their retreat experience whilst others come to retreat because of the advice of their director (Lane, 2008). Obviously a retreat is an occasion when spiritual direction is available for those who wish to use it and Ignatian retreats are built around it.

Formerly associated with Anglo-Catholic spirituality, and in the ministry of Somerset Ward and others of his time closely linked with the sacrament of confession, the direction ministry is now widely welcomed by all shades of churchmanship. Indeed, in recent years, many diocesan ministerial training courses have made it a requirement that their students find and use a spiritual guide. Paula Hollingsworth informs me that half of those currently training as directors in the Leicester Diocese come from Evangelical parishes, a situation which is also the case in other dioceses. The growing interest in spiritual direction parallels the growth in counselling from the 1960's onwards and the desire for personal growth. However, while both are based upon the art of deep listening, direction is concerned with the relationship between the directee and God, and counselling works from a psychological and therapeutic model.

A number of training courses for directors have been set up, based upon two models. One of these, as we have already seen, is the Ignatian pattern, combining training in giving one-to-one retreats with preparation for a wider direction ministry. Because of its roots in the giving of the *Exercises*, this model tends to be intensive and elitist. Sometimes, those who emerge from these courses, which can be quite expensive to undertake, seem to expect to have frequent meetings with their directees and charge fees as in a counselling relationship. This is admittedly a necessary source of income for some religious and lay people who devote themselves to this work. However, many Anglican clergy who are in stipendiary ministry, while welcoming the payment of expenses, regard it as a normal part of their priestly role to offer direction and lead retreats and therefore would be reluctant to accept a fee for it. Gordon Jeff suggests that those who charge are influenced by North American practices, where codes of conduct and insurance schemes to cover possible litigation from directees have been established (Jeff, 2007, p. xii).

Some other courses follow the example of the SPIDIR course established in the Southwark Diocese in the late 1970's by Gordon Jeff, working with Dorothy Nicholson and others. This approach is ecumenical, although it tends to be Anglican in its membership, and also is eclectic and low key, assuming that everyone could benefit from informal, infrequent meetings with a spiritual guide,

perhaps three or four times a year (Jeff, 2007, p. xii). These courses last for about three years, and aim to develop listening skills, an awareness of different schools of spirituality and of ways of prayer, and insight into the kind of issues which may be encountered. I would suggest that this approach fits in with the more laid-back Anglican tradition of pastoral care in contrast with the more intensive Ignatian tradition.

In the 1980's, APR took on the role of producing and updating a directory of training courses, of which at the time of writing there are some 30 to 40 in various parts of the country. They also arranged regular consultations for those who were running them, and act as a referral centre for those looking for directors, including Roman Catholics, tasks still being carried out by the RA today. These functions fit in well under the RA umbrella because often retreat conductors spend much of their time directing people, and I introduce some of them now.

1. Some Retreat Leaders.

Some leaders have been mentioned already and I will not revisit them. Amongst others, Robert Llewelyn who was 98 when he died in February 2008, was within the earlier tradition of godly Anglo-Catholic priests who regularly led retreats, but also used the newer methods. He finished up as warden of the Julian centre in Norwich and is remembered for the series of little books which he edited entitled *Listening to God* (w/Telegraph, 2008 b). Canon A. M. (Donald) Allchin was a University lecturer and student pastor in Oxford and was scholar, writer and retreat giver. Making his home in Wales from 1994, he had a particular interest in Celtic spirituality, and made much use of poetry in his retreats (w /Bangor, 2010).

Martin Israel (1927-2007) was unique. The *Times* summed him up as 'an Anglican priest, mystic author and exorcist who was formerly a pathologist', the source of whose ministry 'was a deep faith in the power of the Christian God to liberate the Christian soul.' He conducted 15 to 20 retreats a year, spoke at many meetings, mostly of clergy, as well as seeing hundreds of people for personal counselling and writing many books. A Jew by birth, he was always a loner, and

suffered long periods of acute depression. He eventually became an Anglican, was ordained in 1974, and served as priest-in-charge of Holy Trinity, Kensington from 1983 until 1996. Throughout his life he remained very shy and introverted, rather mysterious, a person with no small-talk, but he was also a good friend and spiritual adviser to many. All of this made his retreats distinctive, although they retained the format of a preached retreat. His addresses were long and unprepared and he could be guaranteed to fill any retreat house with his admirers. Although the interviews which he gave to retreatants were short in length, with very little being said on either side, those who went to see him reported that he knew instinctively what was going on in their lives, and his insights were penetrating (w/*Telegraph*, 2008 a; w/*Times*, 2008) .

Following in the tradition of Archbishop Michael Ramsey, Archbishop Rowan Williams makes his own personal periods of retirement a priority and he excels as a retreat conductor. He brings to this work a wide academic knowledge of theology, the vision of a poet, a concern with everyday issues without giving slick answers, a faith which is deep enough to be beyond dogmatism, and a lively discipline of prayer. Unfortunately few of his retreat addresses have been published, but we taste something of the flavour of them in books such as *Silence and Honey Cakes*, in which are gathered addresses on the Desert Fathers. A small book *Ponder These Things*, consists of four addresses on icons of the Virgin, revealing his appropriation of insights from Orthodoxy (Williams, 2002; 2003). It was quite typical that, in the face of the dissensions which were threatening to tear Anglicanism apart in 2008, he should begin the Lambeth Conference with a three-day retreat in Canterbury Cathedral (Williams, 2008).

At the beginning of the period covered by this chapter, almost all retreat conductors were priests, quite a high percentage of them religious. Paralleling developments in the Roman church, from the late 1960's onwards we find religious sisters taking up this role and, after they were admitted into Holy Orders, women deacons and priests. Then from the 1980's onwards, some lay-women came to prominence, something not seen since the days of Evelyn Underhill. We have already considered two of them, the scholarly Esther de Waal and the more earthy Joyce Huggett. Probably based on her retreats, in 1989

Huggett published *Open to God* in which she shared methods of contemplative prayer, Ignatian meditation and *Lectio Divina*, and offered material for a month of daily meditations (Huggett, 1989). This was typical of a number of books of the period, including those by Angela Ashwin. She first came to notice with a book on contemplative prayer called *Heaven in Ordinary*, and she has been leading retreats ever since (Ashwin, 1985; 1990). She wrote as a mother of young children, aware of all the obstacles in the way of finding both the time and place for quiet, and giving hope and direction to those who like herself felt the need for silence. Carol Brennand, who attended a retreat led by her recently, tells me that there was a waiting list to attend this retreat, and that Angela skilfully handled the problems of leading a silent retreat in a house which was also being used by a non-silent group (email 25/03/09).

My last example is not an Anglican, but she frequently leads retreats in Anglican houses and in many ways typifies the present position reached by the retreat movement as a whole. Margaret Silf was brought up a Roman Catholic, is a lay woman with one grown up daughter, and was greatly influenced and supported by the Jesuits, including Gerard Hughes. To use her words, she was drawn to the *Exercises* in 1970's, which 'knocked her off her perch,' and she became rooted in Christian communities both at Keele University and in the neighbourhood of Stoke-on-Trent, developing material which could turn 'into an authentic and life-giving encounter with our deepest selves.' She included gospel meditation in the Ignatian manner, fantasy journeys, exercises recalling one's past, contemplation, and aids in becoming more aware of daily life. (Silf, 2004, p. xii, 25). Her books and her retreats show an eclectic approach in gathering tools for the spiritual journey. She tells us that the support of the *Exercises* is still with her, even though now she has lost the old certainties of her Catholic faith and is travelling spiritually through uncharted territory (Silf, 2004, p. ix). A lay person, a woman, ecumenical in outlook and learning from other spiritualities – she typifies where many in the retreat movement are at the moment.

Retreat houses were part of the package which the Church of England adopted from Rome, the provision of which, as we saw in Chapter 3 was greatly

increased from 1920 onwards. How did they fare in the latter part of the 20th century and into the new millennium?

K. Retreat Houses

1. Retreat Houses 1962- 1991 – Growth

During the past forty years the fates of Anglican and of Catholic houses have run in parallel, passing through phases first of growth and then of retrenchment. Those managing them within the two communions have kept in touch with each other informally, and it is my impression that Catholic houses have often recognised current trends more quickly than their Anglican counterparts.

In the Church of England, at the beginning of our period there were some 59 different houses. Of these, 43 were community guest houses, many of which took just three or four guests at a time as private retreatants. Another 14 were diocesan houses and 2 were privately owned (*Vision*, Dec. 1958). Over the following years, the number of houses was to increase significantly. Additional diocesan houses were opened at Offchurch (Diocese of Coventry, 1960), Old Alresford Place (Winchester 1963), Rossendale (Manchester, 1965), Ecton (Peterborough 1968), and, after the closing of the former Theological College and the building of a retreat house in the grounds, at Ely (1973).⁴⁷ In addition, extra accommodation was added at Parceval Hall (Bradford), Copthorne (Worcester) and at Chester.⁴⁸

This provision was needed in part to keep up with the increase in the numbers of retreatants at the time. Houses were also established however to accommodate the courses which the dioceses were developing as part of continuing training for both clergy and laity planned on an ad hoc basis by diocesan Directors of Post Ordination Training and the Adult Education Officers (interview with Revd David Hewlitt, 30/04/05). So, for example, I remember that Offchurch was used extensively for a wide variety of such courses, as well as

⁴⁷ Dr Francis Knight says that the building of a retreat house at Ely was the continuation of a long tradition. Annual retreats for clergy go as far back as the 1880s, and with so many Cambridge colleges, accommodation was never a problem. The Diocesan Deaconess' Home in Bedford hosted retreats for women (Knight, 2010).

⁴⁸ These dates collected from *Vision*.

providing in-service training facilities for Warwickshire Social Services and other secular bodies.

The religious communities were also at that time expanding their provision for retreats. In 1963 the Society of the Sacred Mission (SSM) established the Red House to serve the Diocese of Southall, and in 1966 the Wantage sisters were able to open St Helena's, Ealing to retreatants when the Home Office relinquished their use of it as a remand home (*Vision*, July 1963 p. 13; July 1964, p. 12). The Society of St Peter opened St Columba's House at Woking with the support of the Bishop of Guildford, the Rt Revd George Reindorp. He had a wide vision for its use, saying at its opening in 1968: 'This retreat house will welcome all people of all religions and none, so that God may find them there' (w/Columba, 2009).

As with the diocesan houses, other factors were in play alongside the rise in the numbers of retreatants. Many orders were re-assessing their mission and the use of their buildings because the opportunities for them to be engaged in their traditional roles as teachers, nurses and social workers were decreasing. For example, the Clewer sisters were forced to cut back on their hospital work from 1946 onwards, because there were fewer sisters and also because of the more stringent standards demanded by the growing Welfare State. In looking round for possible new roles, retreat ministry seemed to fit their training and priorities admirably and they had made their former House of Mercy at Clewer into a retreat wing in 1955. By the late 1980's, their Retreat Wing was much in demand for retreats, quiet days and drop-in days, and all the Ignatian methods were being employed. The sisters took advantage of the various courses on offer in retreat conducting and, following the example of the Catholic Cenacle Sisters and others, ceased to rely entirely on outside conductors to staff their events. In 1988, the programme included two drop-in days, three open retreats (preached), two training courses, and one eight day IGR, led by Bishop Chadwick. There was also an opportunity to explore the religious life, a beginners' retreat, painting and prayer and a Gregorian chant retreat. In addition, the sisters were involved in retreats in daily life and in weeks of guided prayer in parishes (Bonham, 1989, p. 145). The Wantage sisters similarly used a former home for unmarried mothers

for retreat purposes, as did the Community of All Hallows at Ditchingham, who opened St Michael's House for retreats in 1983 (Violet, 1983, p. 18).

It was not however all expansion in the 1970's. The Gloucester Diocesan House, St Anne's, Cheltenham, was closed in 1970 due to 'lack of local support' (Vision, 1971 p. 9). The lady warden and her assistant moved to the Worcester Diocesan House at Copthorne near Evesham, which had been a Diocesan house since 1946 when it was given to the bishop by Mrs Amy Holland, whose home it had been. As its use developed the Diocese built a conference wing in 1963, and a new chapel was dedicated in 1964. However, by 1974, the Old House, as it was known, was costing the Diocese £4-5,000 a year. Faced with the threat of closure, in 1975 the Friends organisation offered to take responsibility for the house. Trustees were appointed, and in 1976, a lay community was formed to staff the house, the members of which had been brought together as part of the vibrant life at that time of Coventry Cathedral. The new regime quickly altered the image of the house, and the trustees undertook major fund raising for renewals, repairs and improvements to what was to be 'an interdenominational house where renewal, reconciliation and wholeness of life were paramount.' Peter Middlemass was appointed as Warden in 1983 after having been in charge of the Derby Diocesan House at Morley for a short period. At Copthorne, right up to his retirement in 2008, he adopted a policy of imaginative diversification, introducing a wide spectrum of events with the emphasis on the development of the laity. Known today as 'Holland House, Retreat, Conference and Laity Centre,' the house is a member of the European Association of Academies and Laity Centres whilst continuing to play its full part in the life of the wider retreat movement and offering a varied retreat programme (Collins, 1995, pp. 15, 21, 38, 47, 53, 57, 63, 68). Although retaining an interest in the House, the hands-off approach by the Diocese has given the trustees freedom to develop a viable business plan.

2. House Management.

This raises the issue of house management, in which Anglican and Catholic practices sometimes differ, because of the distinctive ecclesiastical structures of the two communions. As I understand it, in the Catholic Church most houses

have in the past been managed by the religious communities who owned them; whereas in the Church of England, since the days of the redoubtable Annie Harvey at Pleshey, many have been run by single ladies or by married couples under a management committee. The practice of retreats owes much to the dedication, prayers, hard work and welcome of such individuals. A number of other methods have been tried over the past 90 years, and we examine some of them now.

One, as we have just seen at Copthorne, has been the establishment of a lay community. An earlier lay community had been formed in 1966 at Pleshey by the warden, Miss M. F. Every, who had tried community life in secular jobs, bringing together three or four people who met regularly for prayer and bible study (*Vision*, Jan. 1968, p. 5; letter from Mrs Iduna Coulson, 2005). When Henry Evans was its warden during the 1980's, Launde Abbey was effectively run as a community, although this had no formal structure. Since 1980, a lay community has staffed Rydal Hall, which belongs to the Carlisle Diocese. Its members are often there just for a year, some being students from overseas looking for experience in this country (w/Rydal 2008). As we have already mentioned, a community called The Society of Mary and Martha own and manage a house at Sheldon in Devon with the help of local staff (w/Sheldon, 2009).

A more common form of management since the early days of diocesan houses, following Roman practice, has been the use of teams of sisters seconded from their religious communities. So, for example, the Community of the Holy Name, as well as running their Guest House at their Malvern mother house, were in charge of Chester from 1958 to 2000, and ran Verulam House, St Albans from 1961 to 1974. The Order of the Holy Paraclete looked after the York Diocesan House for many years, first at Hessle from 1934 to 1949, and then when it was closed because it was too far from the centre of the diocese, its replacement at Wydale Hall from 1951 – 1974. Since 1983, the Order has run its own retreat centre - The St Oswalds Pastoral Centre - situated near the mother house at Whitby (Barker, 2000, pp. 31, 57). The use of nuns had a number of advantages, including the fact that they were not paid, helping the economics of the houses

which they ran, and secondly they gave the house a routine and atmosphere of prayer. The disadvantages were that the trustees had to hand over some of their authority to the order, and the nuns had to be willing to adapt the times of their own round of daily offices to the varied programmes of retreats. With the decline in the membership of the orders, this source of help is no longer available.

Another method, perhaps unique to the Church of England, has been the appointment of a priest-warden who was also the local incumbent, his stipend not then being a charge on the house. This is the case at Launde Abbey in Leicestershire and at Pleshey in Essex. In every case the parishes involved are small, but the wardens may still find a conflict between their two roles. A more recent and controversial development, also being adopted in some Catholic centres, is the employment of a house manager who has training in the hotel industry, and can therefore run an effective business. Commenting on this in the light of his long experience, Peter Middlemass said that a house needs people in both Martha and Mary roles; someone who can manage the practical house keeping and financial activities, and someone who can create a listening atmosphere and be available as host. This, he said, is the difference between running a hotel and a retreat house (*Retreats*, 2005, p. 8, 9).

The role of the house warden has become increasingly demanding over the years, not least because of the financial instability of many houses, which has led to the closure of a number of them and to major changes in structures and management of others as we will now investigate.

3. Retreat Houses 1991-2008 – Decline.

Since 1991, the number of retreat houses, both Roman Catholic and Anglican, listed in the magazine *Vision* and its successor *Retreats*, has greatly increased. Paddy Lane reports that when she came into post, some 150 houses were listed. Now there are 240 (Lane, 2008). However, during this same period, the number of specified Anglican houses has declined with the closure of some diocesan and community houses. The increase in total provision nationwide has

in large measure been due to the establishment of a number of small houses of no specified denominational affiliation.

In part, the reduction in the number of houses reflects the steady but unquantified decline in those attending retreats since the peak in the middle of the 1960's, but there are other factors at work as well. Over the past twenty years closures have occurred at a rate which appears to have accelerated recently. Often the reason has been combined the financial burden of the extensive repairs and refurbishment, and of the continuously rising standards demanded by health and safety legislation together with the provision of facilities for the disabled, although this is work which the houses would endorse. One of the earliest diocesan houses, Catherington House in the Portsmouth Diocese, which was established in 1922, closed in 1995 (undated letter from Janet Haynes, 2007). Earlier, another pre-war house, Verulam House, St Albans shut its doors, as did Wadderton House, Birmingham, which had been used mainly for training purposes. The Chester House survived until the end of 2007, when the financial problems faced by the Cathedral Chapter who own the property forced them to seek a higher rent than the trustees could afford. Even some post-war houses, faced with decreasing numbers and increased costs, have gone to the wall. These include Ecton House, Edward King House in Lincoln, the Ripon Diocesan House at Barrowby, and St Gabriel's, Canterbury. More recently in 2009, the chairman of the trustees of the Derby House at Morley announced its closure at very short notice because it had been hit by the economic downturn and, lacking en-suite facilities, it required the necessary upgrade costing an estimated £800,000 which was beyond their resources (*Church Times*, 30/01/09, p.5). So whereas in 1981 some 25 diocesan retreat houses advertised in *Vision*, in 2008 only 17 were listed in *Retreats* (Blewett, General Synod Background Paper, Feb. 2008). Writing of the situation in 2006, Tim Blewett of Launde Abbey accused dioceses of neglecting 'these great spiritual and mission powerhouses of the Church...over the years' or even selling them off to help, in the short-term, diocesan budgets (APR Newsletter, 2006, p. 3).

There has been a similar decline in the number of community-owned houses. This is in large measure due to the gradual decrease in the size of

communities themselves over the past 40 years or more. Now, according to Barry Orford, their membership is in rapid decline, the average age is high, recruitment is low, and many who come to test a vocation leave before taking vows (Orford, 2009, p. 12). The remaining members have therefore often moved to smaller accommodation, resulting in the closure of their retreat facilities. An early example of this was the Community of the Holy Name who closed their large guest house when they moved from Malvern to a smaller house at Derby in the 1980's, where they can now host just eight guests at a time. The retreat wing at Clewer was lost when the remaining sisters moved more recently to Oxford, and the Community of St Lawrence at Belper, Derbyshire, who had been hosting retreats for over a hundred years, had to cut back on numbers drastically when they moved to Southwell in 2001 (ARLYB, 2007, pp. 66, 72). The dwindling Community of the Resurrection reassessed their commitments, and decided that in 2009 they would close the highly esteemed St Francis House at Hemingford Grey Huntingdon, as they were losing £30,000 a year and it would need £500,000 for its refurbishment. An exception is provided by the St Peter Sisters of Woking, who are now so few in number that they have dispersed into the surrounding parishes. However, their trustees have used their endowments to refurbish St Columba's House, and have gathered a strong team of expert practitioners upon whom they can draw to run a varied programme (w/Columba 2009). How then is the ministry of retreat houses to continue? There seem to be two alternative strategies which are being tried; one is to go larger, the second is to go smaller.

The first strategy was, I would suggest, initiated when the last diocesan house to be established, Glenfall House in the Gloucester Diocese, was opened in 1992. A gift from the Community of St Peter the Apostle who were moving out because of declining numbers, the diocese's initial reluctance to accept, because of their experience twenty years earlier at Cheltenham, was overcome when they were left a substantial bequest which gave them the resources for a total refurbishment. This was carried out to commercial standards and so for the first time in an Anglican house there were some *en suite* bedrooms (Morgan, 1999, pp. 4, 12). Perhaps significantly, although the house is called a 'Retreat and

Conference centre,' retreats are not specifically mentioned in the trustees' aims. These are to 'provide an attractive meeting place for the Diocese of Gloucester where people may gather to develop their Christian life and ministry,' and to 'provide a Conference Centre for charities and other groups working in and for the community' (Financial Statement for 2003, p. 1). These aims, whether spelt out or not, seem to have been adopted by other houses as well.

Since then, a number of established houses have followed this route. One was Whirlow Grange in Sheffield, established in 1953, the first new diocesan house to be opened after the Second World War. Partially refurbished in the late 1980's when a conference room was added, a major renovation programme in 2004 'saw the refurbishment of the centre with all the bedrooms being made en-suite, the creation of three conference and seminar rooms and the provision of an access lift and disabled access facilities' (w/Whirlow 2007). More recently, Whalley Abbey in the Blackburn Diocese, which ever since its purchase for retreat purposes by the then Bishop of Manchester, William Temple in 1924, has been a difficult and uneconomic building to use, has been developed in a similar manner (w/Whalley, 2008). At the time of writing Foxhill, belonging to the Chester Diocese and mainly used for conferences, has been completely upgraded; Shallowford in the Lichfield Diocese has ambitious plans, and Launde Abbey has recently developed their conference facilities and added en-suite bedrooms (w/Foxhill, 2008; w/Shallowford, 2008; w/Launde, 2009).

With the employment of a professional house manager, developments such as these can turn a financial liability into a source of income for the diocese, but some users are concerned about the consequences for the practice of retreat. It becomes difficult to maintain the peaceful atmosphere which is conducive to spiritual retirement, the cost of the improvements puts up the expense of going on retreat, and thirdly, whilst acknowledging that some comfort is necessary when on retreat – it is difficult to pray, for example, when one is really cold – some regard a measure of simplicity as conducive to spiritual alertness. Peter Middlemass sees a moral issue here, asking if our twenty-first century expectations of hospitality are appropriate in a world where we are becoming more aware of the extremes of lifestyle and where we are encouraged to live

simply so that others may simply live (*RA News Letter*, 2006, p. 6). Martin Shaw wonders if the increased standards attack the very essence of retreat, saying:

the increasing demand to have individualised diets and lavatories and showers inside our own rooms raises questions...about how aware we really are of [the] gift of silence [with]in the Body of Christ' (*Retreats*, 2007, p. 11).

Tim Blewett, warden of Launde Abbey, has disputed some of these charges. Firstly, he maintains that his priority is that Launde remains a house of prayer, and he and his colleagues maintain a round of offices and daily Eucharist in the House chapel, which retains its atmosphere of deep stillness. Secondly, improvements have been paid for out of capital, grants and fund raising, and are not a charge on current income; increases in charges reflect the rising costs of food, heating, staff and other running costs. Thirdly, he would suggest that although comfort levels are higher than they were in the past, by present standards they are not excessive. Further, he claims that when conferences and retreats are going on at the same time, the house is big enough to separate the two groups, so that retreatants can be in silence when they choose to be. Plans are now afoot for the creation of a separate quiet dining-room for retreatants to use (Interview 1/10/08).

Other wardens also are aware of the issues, and provision for the spiritual ministry of the houses which have been upgraded is deliberately being given priority. At Whirlow Grange a spirituality centre has been built in the grounds, where the Diocesan Spirituality Officer maintains an ongoing programme of workshops, quiet days, courses and retreats, using the main house for accommodation as necessary (w/Whirlow 2007). Similarly, Whalley Abbey is now running a spirituality programme arranged by the diocese rather than the house manager which would appear to be more extensive than it was before the changes, with the aim that it should 'continue to be a holy place that draws and points people to God and offers them an experience of peace' (w/Whalley, 2008). Further, diocesan houses have from their inception been used as training and conference centres, and it could be argued that the church is merely becoming more professional in managing its resources. However, a sense of unease

remains, and because of their personal experience, some seasoned retreatants remain sceptical about the arguments being put forward.

An alternative strategy for providing a continuing retreat-house ministry is to go smaller, so cutting staff and overheads to a minimum. Over the past thirty years a variety of such houses have opened, often privately owned and run on an ecumenical basis. An early example of this was Marygate House on Lindisfarne, jointly established in 1975 by the then rector and the local Methodist minister, which can take up to 22 people accommodated in simple cottages and is still going strong (w/Marygate 2011). In 1992, Charles Ruxton and his wife opened up an old cottage attached to their home on the Long Mountain in Shropshire to individuals or small groups who want to make a private retreat, usually on a self catering basis (email 06/12/08). A third example is Ivy House in Wiltshire, run by the Community of St. Denys, who have a particular concern for justice, ecological and environmental issues, and offer 'cosy rooms for residential stays' (w/Ivy, 2008).

In the village of Wenhaston, on the Suffolk Sandlings, is a former public house, now renamed 'Green Blade,' which is manned by a non-residential core team including the Revd Lindsay Spendlove, and is available for small groups who want to set time aside for being with God. Lindsay comments, 'being a small house means that those who listen and guide must also clean and cater, and perhaps this contributes to this sense of homeliness' (*Retreats*, 2008, p. 15). Yet another small house came into being when the one remaining sister of the Community of the Epiphany in Truro moved out of their house, enabling it to be used for day meetings and for up to 16 over-night guests (w/Epiphany, 2011).

Running a small retreat house is not without its problems. For example, Shell Cottage, set down in a bay at Penberth, St Buryan at the tip of Cornwall, which can accommodate up to six people, was closed after ten years of running because it had been too successful and caused too much work for its owner (w/Shell, 2009). Similarly a house on the Welsh Border belonging to Canon Andrew Talbot-Ponsonby and his wife and meant to serve the Diocese of Hereford, closed because a suitable buyer could not be found at the right time (email, 16/03/09). Because they are small and work on minimum staff, such

houses make large demands on those who run them and can therefore be short-lived, but I suggest that in the coming years they will play a growing role in providing opportunities for spiritual withdrawal.

So in the Church of England the way retreats are offered, the people coming, those who lead them and the places in which they are held have all grown in diversity over the last forty years. What is the immediate situation and what does the future hold?

Section 3: The Scene Today

L. The present and the future

Firstly, the Retreat Association continues to link the various denominational groups, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Free Churches, maintaining the present ecumenical character of the retreat movement while APR is developing the links which it has had over many years with Diocesan Spirituality Officers. However, APR faces falling membership, dwindling financial resources and rising costs – although this has been a familiar story throughout its history. In May 2009, for the first time, the office was moved out of London and they are now based at Amersham, sharing premises with the Quiet Garden Trust. Their new Director is Alison MacTier who has a background in religious publishing. As it approaches its centenary in 2013, the role of APR is as important as ever in the development of the Anglican retreat tradition.

Secondly, the way in which retreats are offered remains diverse, with a continuing emphasis on the holistic approach to spirituality. A recent description of a retreat conducted by Pat Marsh gives a picture of how it can work out in practice. She describes how those who had come had been an unlikely group of people, some having been surrounded with scripture since they were in the cradle, while others had been found by God in mid-life. One was a midwife and another was a priest with 20 years' experience. It had been an Advent retreat, and so had focused on 'the Saviour in the straw' who, as she puts it, had 'captivated

us, taken us to deep places, challenged us, healed us in our inner being and comforted us.' There had been moments when they had felt compelled to kneel silently before the crib, and others when they had danced spontaneously or gone outside and stood beneath the stars and shouted, 'Tell God, I say "Yes".' The material used for the process of the retreat had been woven from poetry and meditation, music and prayer, imagery and symbolism. They had blessed each other by their fellowship and the gentle sharing of their stories but they had also granted each other at times the precious gift of shared silence. The use of contemporary writing, music and art, interwoven with contemplative meditation, had enabled them to connect the truth and reality of the birth of Jesus with their individual situations (*Retreats*, 2009, p. 19). As in retreats from years ago, the retreat had been based upon a key Gospel incident, but instead of approaching it purely intellectually, mind, imagination, emotion, visual imagery, personal sharing and silence had all been used in a contemplative manner to relate scripture and daily life.

One new way of offering an experience of withdrawal to people who find that retreats are now too expensive is through the Quiet Garden Movement. The vision for this came to Philip Roderick, an Anglican Priest working in the Diocese of Sheffield, when enjoying the peace of his own garden. He realised that all that was needed for a simple ministry of hospitality and prayer was a home and a garden – there was no need for expensive premises. The first Quiet Garden opened in 1992, and the concept has spread in this country to 300 centres and others are being established in other parts of the world. As well as individuals opening their homes and gardens for occasional days of stillness and reflection, quiet spaces are also being developed in urban areas and in hospitals and prisons (w/Quiet 2010). Nationally, a part-time staff of two co-ordinates the development of the movement. Obviously this way of providing a quiet day is meeting a need, but I would suggest that it cannot replace the residential retreat.

Thirdly, the desire of people to come on retreat continues, but numbers decline. Paddy Lane said that the hard core of retreatants, who back in 1994 attended a preached retreat annually, no longer exists; fewer are going on retreat, and in particular on preached retreats. No statistics are kept, but her impression

was that whereas in 1994 parish retreats would be bringing 30-40 people at a time, now it is more likely to be just 10-12. Further, people seem to be avoiding commitment; for example, individuals are more likely to book at the last minute, making it very difficult to know whether a particular retreat is going to be viable or not. Again, people are less likely these days to become members of organisations such as APR, and those who do join do so just for a short time, two or three years, whereas in the past a number were members for life. For some, retreats are the way in which they keep in touch with God as they are not being fed by their local church; for others the retreat house is a place of comfort, as they have been hurt by the church. Others do not go to church at all, but want to keep in touch with spiritual things (Lane, 2008).

Fourthly, people are coming on retreat for a wide variety of reasons. Writing in an ecumenical context in 2002, Margaret Silf reported some of the motives which she had heard from people on retreat. First, there was a striving after 'the other' - something or some one they did not yet know - expressed in a hunger for depth and a desire for authentic meditative prayer and the ability to listen to what was happening in the depths of their hearts. Again, there was a desire for wholeness and inclusiveness, for a spirituality that revered the whole person – body, mind, spirit, senses and imagination - and that included the whole of creation. Next, they were seeing life as an unfolding story, and wanted ways of recognising and sharing their personal story with the help of another person who would listen to, value and authenticate it. After that there was a desire to encounter the radical person of Jesus. She explained, 'a Christ-centred retreat is a prime opportunity for beginning to explore what it might mean at a personal level to be in partnership with this radical peace-maker.' Also there was a desire for community and intimacy. 'For many people, the experience of being listened to with whole-hearted and loving attention can be the first taste of genuine human intimacy, where "heart speaks to heart."' (*Retreats*, 2002, pp. 3, 4). This seems to echo the concerns of spiritual seekers outside the church as well as those within.

Returning to the wider survey of what is happening in the retreat movement at the moment, what, fifthly, is happening to the houses to which they are

coming? As we have seen, the larger houses are becoming more comfortable, more professional in relation to the hospitality trade, and offering more resources. There may well now be a meditation room as well as a chapel, fully equipped conference rooms, art rooms, a labyrinth in the grounds and hospitality trays in the bedrooms.

The state of the Church of England diocesan houses was the subject of a debate held in General Synod in February 2009, probably the first time they had been discussed in the governing body of the Church of England. In the briefing paper which he had prepared for members, Tim Blewett gave the results of a survey which he had carried out to ascertain the state of the houses. He said that many of the larger houses, which benefited from economies of scale and increased use by the secular market, reported that they were operationally viable and sustainable for day-to-day business, but that smaller [diocesan] houses seemed to be struggling. Almost all of them needed capital investment to pay for the refurbishment of their buildings and for the creation of new facilities to meet changing market needs. Most wardens were optimistic in the short term, and almost all felt that their work was valued by their dioceses. Some were still receiving financial support from the diocese, but others were now expected to operate as stand-alone businesses (*Church Times*, 20/02/09).

Sixthly, the future of houses of all kinds, diocesan, community-based and privately owned, remains uncertain and it may be that they have to change their function. For example, within the Roman Catholic church, the Jesuit Joseph Tetlow, who travels widely visiting retreat centres throughout the world, reported in 1999 that in many more affluent countries the trend is moving away from the provision of houses to the opening of spirituality centres, often in the heart of cities, offering flexible programmes and outreach into the surrounding parishes (Tetlow, 1999, p. 21). St Beuno's runs such an outreach programme of guided prayer and lay training in the Roman Catholic diocese of Wrexham, and it may well be that, working with diocesan spirituality officers, such programmes can emerge in the established church (Jackson, 1999). Perhaps the Anglican church retreat houses need to develop in the same way, say, as at Whirlow. An experienced guide told me recently that he had not been asked to lead a retreat in

a retreat house for some years but was busy leading Retreats in Daily Life, the alternative method prescribed by Ignatius himself, where the care of an individual retreatant might last for as long as 18 months.

It would seem that retreat houses are important but they are not indispensable. Julia Morant, vice-chair of APR, has commented that although a particular kind of space - sacred space - was essential for a retreat, it does not need to be a church or a retreat house. It must be a place where there has been Christian prayer, a place with a story, 'a powerful history of connections, people and events...when we visit we draw on that power and add our own prayers to it' (APR Newsletter, 2009, p. 3).

Seventhly and finally, looking to the future, as Paddy Lane points out, there seem to be opportunities which are being offered to the retreat movement to which it should respond. In wider society, the word 'retreat' is becoming familiar and retreats are seen as an opportunity to draw back from the pressures of daily life. For example, hotels offer retreats, using the facilities of their spa, concerned with health, massage, 'pampering' and care. Paddy suggests that Christian houses can build on this, seeing 'retreats as time set aside from daily life, with the whole person being cared for,' and perhaps the upgrading of houses will enable this to happen (Lane, 2008). Some businesses take their management teams on 'retreat' for purposes of team building or to have time to see the big picture and get a sense of direction. Roman Catholic Benedictines have gone as far as offering courses on the Benedictine rule to business managers (Tredget, 2000). A recent stay in hospital drew my attention to a 'Retreat Room' which could be used by relatives when visiting someone in the ward.

Another opportunity is being offered by a European Union directive relating to concerns about the increasing levels of noise pollution, which instructs member governments to identify places of quiet and make the information available to the public. At the moment Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is carrying out research on how best to do this (w/Defra 2009). Similarly, David Conradson of the University of Southampton is involved in a research project entitled 'The Revalorization of Stillness: Popular Engagement with Places of Retreat in Contemporary Britain' focusing on the ways in which

various retreat houses are responding to 'popular desire to make place for stillness' (Conradson, 2007). All of this emphasises the potential of initiatives such as the Quiet Garden Movement and, with imaginative programmes, of the retreat houses themselves.

In addition, there seems to be an interest in spiritual retreats from people beyond the fringe of the churches and already retreat houses find people coming to explore further. The continuing sales of Stafford Whiteaker's inter-faith *The Good Retreat Guide*, written for those who are looking for 'new values, an alternative to materialism or simply some rest and relaxation' and now in its 5th edition, is one indication of this interest (Whiteaker, 2001). Another is the unexpected interest shown in the BBC 2 series *The Monastery* and its successor *Silence* filmed at Worth Abbey and screened during 2005 and 2010 (Jolly, 2006), which seemed to confirm Rosemary Harthill's view:

Once retreats were perceived as only for priests, nuns, or the determinedly pious. Today a retreat can be a way of dipping a toe into that delicious, but possibly dangerous, A to Z of spirituality - from Abandon to Zen, through ashram, angels, darkness, dance, John Donne, ecstasy and the rest (Harthill, 2001, p. 217).

Paul Heelas, who conducts continuing research on the development of new spiritualities in Kendal and elsewhere, writes that in his estimation 'retreats are an area in which the concerns of the Christian church coincide with those in the newer spiritualities.' After noting, perhaps unfairly, that in what the churches have on offer, anything concerned with 'quality of life issues is noticeable by its absence', he continues:

The only significant exception concerns spiritual retreats, normally held in designated Christian retreat centres...Our enquiries suggest that the market for such retreat activity is growing, with particular demand for retreats that involve one-to-one spiritual direction aimed at personal spiritual growth (Heelas, Woodhead et al., 2005, p. 69).

A sign of the times is that even the Retreat Association is being invited to consider opening its doors to non-Christian members (Clifford, 2007, p. 5). There are people in other Faiths who value this method of working and in a completely secular environment those who see the point of having time out from the weekly routine to assess their work and their life style. The Church of Rome

would not go as far as this yet and neither would the Church of England, but it is of interest that it is even being suggested. In all of these ways, there seems to be a continuing role for the practice of retreat, although perhaps in forms and in places we have yet to discover.

M. The Society of Retreat Conductors, 1955 – 2006

Once more we will bring this chapter to an end by bringing together some of the themes running through it by considering the history of the Society of Retreat Conductors, beginning in the year 1955.

On Fr Mather's death, the Society came into the care of Napier Pitfield Sturt (1902-1982), who had been ordained priest in 1929. His entire active ministry was spent in the Diocese of London including 24 years as Vicar of Holy Cross, St. Pancras, and 18 years as Chaplain of St. Saviour's Priory in Haggerston in what may be termed the 'Father Mather SRC Tradition'. He had taken part in the ascetic theology course in the 1930's and was associated with the Society for 50 years. In November 1951 he was appointed Treasurer by Fr Mather, the then Superior, which meant that he also became a member of SRC Chapter. So in the autumn of 1956, he was elected non-residential Chairman, a position which he held until October 1967, although he retained his place on the Council until 1977 (SRC Archives Box3/CM3/31/03/57; Box5/AGM/25/10/67; Obituary of Fr Sturt CB/SB1/1982). The aims of the Society continued to be Ignatian in character, it still maintained its priority for work amongst men and it still aimed to run retreats of sufficient length to be of value. The house paid its way by allowing non-SRC retreats in, and in fact its use continued to increase because this was a time when the numbers going on retreat peaked. However it was felt that having non-Ignatian retreats was not in accordance with the Society's original aims, and this caused some soul searching.

The domestic side of the operation was kept going by Miss Lorna Daziel, who had been a member of the Society ever since it was founded, along with some friends and volunteers. With her friend Bertha Clark, she had thrown herself into the work of the new and penniless SRC, coping with Fr Mather's retreat addresses and large correspondence, while other interests faded out. For

many years she was secretary, hostess, warden, organiser and general factotum, sometimes cook, housemaid and table maid as well. For ten to 15 years her pluck and perseverance managed to keep Stacklands in existence until her strength failed. She gave up work in 1968 and died in 1971 (SRC Archives Box3/CM4/Sept. 67; May 71). Coupled with her must go Molly and Jeff Mills. He assisted with the garden, and her association with the house went back to the Tuffnell Park days, doing the cooking until the 1990's when she was well past retirement.

In 1967, Canon Donald Nicholson, who was then Rector of St Mary's, Bourne Street, took over as Chairman, with Fr Chamberlain as vice chairman and Mr Johnson, a retired gentleman who lived at 1 Stacklands Cottages, as treasurer. The house was kept going by a succession of resident housekeepers assisted by volunteers. However, by October of the following year, it was being suggested that the house be closed after a year owing to the problems in keeping the place going and maintaining the necessary staff. The idea was to purchase a smaller house which would take just a few retreatants, the present house being sold to a suitable Church society. It was reported to the AGM that in 1968 the number attending the house for 30 retreats were 51 priests (42 more than in 1958), 42 men and 236 ladies, making a total of 329. However, the Society's own retreats were poorly attended, at the most filling half the available accommodation (SRC Archives Box3/CM4/29/10/1969).

But by the October of the following year the position had changed. There were no takers for the property, and Donald Nicholson had offered to resign his living and to move into residence on condition that his parents could move in as well. Further, he had a group of young clergy from the London area who had begun training as Ignatian conductors according to the original aims of the founders of the Society. The offer was accepted with alacrity and Nicholson took up residence at Stacklands for a stipend of £350 per annum, with his parents paying a nominal sum. In the end, mother and father survived for only a year but Nicholson was to be in residence for the next ten years (SRC Archives Box3/CM4/26/10/1970).

A residential conference was held for the young conductors the following April (1971) at which the future of the society was planned. The fourteen of them committed themselves to take part in a two-year training course with a mixture of days and short residential sessions. They were later joined by a second group of clergy and also some who undertook the training at a distance. Nicholson was joined in residence at Stacklands by Michael Robson in September 1972, who was to stay with the Society for nearly 25 years. His duties were Company Secretary, including taking the minutes of all meetings, doing the booking for the house and keeping everything running there, acting as server in chapel and serving meals. He moulded it to suit his personality, and in the end it was very much his society (SRC Archives Box/CM4/17/07/72).

For the next ten years or so, the house went along very smoothly and the Society flourished. In 1973 it had 28 members and the house hosted thirty retreats a year, ten of them society events and another ten with members as leaders. Total attendance was 367, of whom 50 were priests, 80 men and the rest were ladies. Thus the Society was fulfilling its aim of teaching new men to take Ignatian retreats, although the original intention to have a resident community was not being fulfilled (SRC Archives Box3/CM4/20/11/1973).

At about this time, after Vatican II the Jesuits in the Roman Church were changing the way in which they conducted Ignatian retreats by going back to the original teaching of St Ignatius. This led Donald Nicholson to make an Individually Guided Retreat in 1978 at Loyola Hall for a month (Report by D Nicholson in archives). This encouraged some other members to follow his example, and John Arrowsmith attended an 8 day IGR at St Beunos in North Wales in 1980. As reported earlier, Fr Gerard Hughes was the warden there and was opening it up to Christians of all denominations. The pattern of retreat was four periods of private prayer each day for a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of one hour, 20 -30 minutes interview daily and a mass at midday. The emphasis was on repetition; there were only two Bible passages each day with some background reading, and the prayer exercises were chosen for each individual. The dress was informal, something which particularly struck SRC members, and there was time at St Beuno's beforehand for compiling a faith

history (SRC Archives CB/SB1/Report on Study Week 1981). Arrowsmith was followed by other members of the Society who found it helpful and shared their experience with others. But the Society was split between those who had this wider training and those who only had experience of SRC, and this was to have an effect upon the future.

The house was soon in financial trouble having spent monies from investment income on fire doors which were being required by government legislation rather than re-investing, a pattern to be repeated for next 25 years (SRC Archives Box3/CM4/13/06/75). In 1979 it was seriously proposed once more that the house be sold and it was suggested that a small house be purchased in the country, but nothing was done (SRC Archives Box5/AGM/09/07/79). Despite this, in that year the total attendance for retreats went up above 400 for the first time, being 427 people (SRC Archives Box3/CM4/24/03/80).

In 1980 Fr Nicholson gave up his task as Chaplain and his residency at the house to take on that role to the Convent of St Mary at Inverness, but retained the office of Chairman and Superior (SRC Archives Box3/CM4/10/11/80). This left only Michael Robson in residence in the house. He had been a member of the Society from 1973 to 1978, when he resigned for personal reasons but it did not alter his employment by the Society (SRC Archives Box3/CM4/02/06/78). He was regarded as a non-voting member of the Council. Nicholson soon found it to be too much of a burden to be Chairman from Scotland, and in 1982 he resigned as Chairman but once more was elected to the honorary post of Superior. His successor was Mr K G Harland who had been associated with the Society for many years, while the Revd Peter Laister continued as Vice-Chairman, a post which he had held since Nicholson was Chairman (SRC Archives Box5/AGM/02/09/82).

There was a period of trouble in the Society which came to a head when the AGM in 1985 was delayed for several months because the legality of Michael Robson was put to doubt. He was regarded as a member of the Society but according to English Company Law, no member should act as Company Secretary but it must be a paid official. This made every member of the Society in effect illegal because, knowingly or unknowingly, they had gone along with

this position. After an Extraordinary General Meeting had been called at which this position was clarified, the AGM eventually went forward in December and Michael ceased to be regarded as a member (SRC Archives Box5/AGM/08/11/85; AGM/16/12/85). However, as a result, Revd Laister resigned from the Society because of all the flack which had been directed at the Council, going to America soon afterwards. The Revd F J Arrowsmith was elected as Chairman with Mr Harland as Vice-Chairman and it was further agreed that there be a revision of the Articles of Association.

This however was only the tip of the iceberg. The real difference was between those who wanted to keep the Society as it was, reflecting the comfortable Anglo-Catholic ethos, and those who wanted a more progressive image according to the latest methods of working suggested by the Jesuits. It was centred at first on the London Study Cell which consisted mainly of those members who lived in the London area. However, as time went on, the Cell dispersed throughout the country, and roughly the division came to lie between those who had experienced an IGR and those who had undertaken only the Preached Retreat. It focused on such matters as the appearance of Chapel and the atmosphere of the House. The trouble was to rumble on for many years right up to the present day and on the whole the conservative line prevailed.

Despite this controversy, use of Stacklands continued to increase. In 1984–85, the residential total was 494, and the number of day visitors was 419, making a total of 913 guests (SRC Archives CB/SB2/Chairman's report 1986). In the year 1986–7 this had increased to 511 and 607, the first year that the number of day guests was more than residential, and by 1995 the figure are 482 residential and 1,117 day guests (SRC Archives CB/SB2/Annual Report for 1987 and CB/SB3/1996). This was a fairly typical pattern for the period. Those retreat houses that kept going were seeing their residential business being supplemented by day business because this was cheaper for the user. Further, the majority of retreats were not Ignatian in character, which was not in accordance with the Society's aims. The total number of laity coming on SRC retreats went down from 89 in the year 1990 to 53 in the year 1995, whilst the number of clergy went down from 40 to 15 in the same period. Moreover, Stacklands was unique in

having so many guests coming without a conductor and without food (295 on 1995/6) because they found the retreat house charges were too expensive, although they still appreciated the atmosphere of the place (SRC Archives Green Sheet in CB/SB4).

This level of business demanded a dedicated staff, and while Michael Robson was in charge he succeeded in keeping the staff available, usually one fellow resident housekeeper assisted by various people from the village. However, they did not stay for long and there was a succession of housekeepers. When he went, which he did in 1998 when he retired, they went too.

His successors were Rev. David Rogers, a deacon in the Church of England, who ran the place virtually single handed with help from the village, followed by the Rev. Jim and Mrs. Liz Bateman, who shared the work between them. However, it quickly became clear that the place had run out of money, and reluctantly it was closed in 2005 and sold in 2007, apart from the two cottages. This provided a capital sum of just under £2,000,000, the income from which is being used to fund a Field Officer working with the Retreat Association to develop Ignatian retreats, and also to give grants to those undertaking the study of retreats. It is far from the dreams of 1924, but is at least fulfilling the aims of promoting Ignatian retreats and training people in their leadership.

N. Conclusion

The case of the Society of Retreat Conductors is an extreme example of the Church of England following, and sometimes actively co-operating in, the attempts of the Roman Catholic Church to reform the ways in which it offered retreats in the latter half of the twentieth century. This lead was followed by the Anglican Church generally which changed its manner of working, first with great success but in this later twenty years with increasing difficulty. In recent years, there has been a glimpse of the method being adopted by non-Christian faiths.

The sad thing is that, despite the efforts of so many enthusiasts over the past 150 years, some informal recent research would seem to indicate that the practice of retreat remains unknown to most people within the church itself and this does not give much hope for those beyond it (Bryant, 2004, p. 50; email

from Richard Thorneycroft 01/01/09). However amongst a significant minority it still has a strong influence, and its value is being increasingly recognised by those beyond the boundaries of the church. Whether there has ever been a distinctive Anglican practice of retreat, how far it has been shaped by developments in the Church of Rome and what other factors have been at work, are questions which we will try to answer in the final chapter.

Chapter 5. The practice of retreat in the Roman Catholic and Church of England churches.

This thesis has attempted to answer the following question: ‘when, how and why have some members of the Church of England adopted and adapted the Catholic Reformation practice of retreat?’ Coupled with this has been the following working hypothesis: ‘Developments in the Anglican practice of retreat have usually been stimulated by new initiatives in the use of the *Spiritual Exercises* within the Roman Catholic Church.’ How far have I proved the thesis and borne out the working hypothesis? I propose to answer these questions by first analysing what the Catholic Reformation tradition of retreat was and by seeing how far the Anglican Church has adopted this. We will then consider how far this has been stimulated by prior activities within the Church of Rome and what is due to other stimuli.

A. The Catholic Reformation Practice of Retreat

The Catholic Reformation practice of retreat consisted of five elements inherited from St Ignatius: silence and solitude, having an authorised priest to lead, following the Ignatian pattern of meditation, and of having a special place for doing the exercises. We will consider these one at a time.

1. Silence and Solitude

Firstly, a retreat is a time for solitude and quiet. Ignatius tells the exercitant to meditate in silence on the themes which he suggests and make the themes the person’s own. Why is this?

Humankind is a mixture. They are a communal animal, needing other people and learning from them, but they are also a solitary animal, needing their privacy to find themselves and their own way through life. They need other people from whom to first learn the facts of the Christian faith, but they need their solitude so that the faith can become their own. They need to think with the whole church Catholic but they need also to think and feel their own ideas and desires. So the way of prayer has included both times of fellowship and times of solitude, both shared prayer and times when they are on their own, both the use

of words and the use of silence. The Christian way has always made use of corporate liturgy and of solitariness. It is true that the actual mixture will vary from individual to individual – one person will need more solitude than some one else – and this will vary throughout the person's life, but the fundamental needs are the same throughout.

A person will naturally bring these needs into their life and will find their own balance, but a retreat is an attempt to formalise this, and in this Catholic and Anglican retreats agree. They are primarily a time of rest and reorientation for those in this busy world as it is easy to forget God and we are here. Secondly, it is a time for self examination leading to confession (often auricular) absolution and rededication, for which we have not time in ordinary life. Thirdly, it is a time when we can know God's presence. He is with us all the time and we can be aware of him whether we are with other people or not, but it is easier to be conscious of this fact when we are giving Him our full attention. Then we can contemplate the revealed truths and absorb them into our very being, which is not primarily an intellectual matter so much as one of the affections and the will. Finally, it is a time when we can practice the techniques of mental prayer, meditation, contemplation and being quiet with God without interruption, which is something it is not easy to do.

Fr Christopher Jamison, Prior of the Benedictine Monastery at Worth, has recently tackled our present-day reluctance to enter silence in a series of three programmes on BBC 2 (Friday Oct. 22nd, 29th, and Nov. 5th 2010). He took as his theme 'silence is the gateway to God; silence is the way to knowing yourself; silence opens a gateway to the soul; silence is the foundation of the Christian contemplative tradition.' He said that one could not really keep silence without their lives being changed and went on to prove it in the lives of five ordinary people by introducing them to silence in various ways. Only two had had a previous Christian experience, but all during the period felt God's presence in diverse but real ways. At first the experience was uncomfortable but finally it became real and positive. Those of us who are responsible for making silence available to others should have faith that it will be alright in the end if the retreatant has trust in God.

The tradition of silence has been maintained by the Catholic practice of retreat and has been accepted in the Church of England, although it has been questioned of late in both churches. However, we do well to keep this practice before us as it is the heart of St Ignatius' teaching.

2. The Conductor as an authorised priest

The role of conductor in a retreat includes teaching the Christian faith and it was assumed in Roman Catholic circles that the only person who had authority to teach the faith was a priest, either religious or secular, and he was therefore inevitably unmarried and male. In Catholicism, retreats were, and are, almost invariably led by religious, often by Jesuits but also by other orders, including the Franciscans, Benedictines, Lazarists, Eudists, Oratorians, Passionists and Redemptorists, men who had a wide experience both as retreatants and retreat givers and whose devotional life had been trained by the discipline of their order (Debuchy, 1911).

Anglican retreats for the first 100 years have kept to this rule, but have allowed secular clergy to share the role with their professed brethren. This was for historical reasons, as for the first ten years there were no male religious and retreats had to be taken by seculars, but these were mostly unmarried like their Roman counterparts because Anglo-Catholic priests tended to remain in that state of life. Then after ten years the SSJE came into existence with one of their aims being the conducting of retreats, to be followed some thirty years later by CR. The only exception was Reverend Mothers who kept the leading of the profession retreat to themselves, but this is a special case as they were responsible for teaching the traditions of their order. As time went on, married priests inevitable began to take this leadership position which brought the possibility of the addresses being more 'earthed' in everyday situations.

With the exception of Evelyn Underhill, this remained the rule for the first 100 years, but then things began to change. The first thing that happened was the gradual supplementation of retreats by mixed retreats of both men and women. This allowed husbands to come with their wives along with single people. Then, under the stimulus of the Roman Church which allowed suitably trained women to lead retreats, the Anglican Church also began allowing women to lead retreats.

This was done first of all for Ignatian style retreats but spread to others. At first they had to work with a chaplain so that they could provide sacramental ministry, but now with women priests in the Church of England, they can take them completely on their own, although a chaplain is still necessary if a lay person is taking a retreat.

This has had a positive effect on the conducting of retreats. Women tend to look at things in a way which is different from men, for example being more creative in the use of physical objects to provide different ways into prayer, looking at the Bible from a different angle and being more empathetic with people in their daily problems. In fact the ideal situation is a retreat led jointly by a man and woman team where one can complement the other in choosing and approaching the subjects being dealt with.

This is a clear example of change being stimulated by Roman influence, but of Anglicans being able to go further than their Catholic counterparts because their church has allowed them to. The Church of England has its own reasons for admitting women to the priesthood which have nothing to do with retreats. Moreover this is seen as fulfilling the greater catholicity of the church in allowing women to play their full part as leaders in the life of the body of Christ.

3. The Ignatian pattern of Meditations

The sequence of meditations followed in a retreat does not always follow the Ignatian pattern. From the early 17th century onwards they were enriched by elements found in dogmatic theology, the liturgy and contemporary current spirituality (de Guibert, 1972, p. 541). Indeed, Jesuits themselves freely adapted the principles behind the *Exercises* quite early on, as the 'books of devotion without number, handbooks for missionaries, systems of retreat' published in the last three centuries show (Kirk, 1932, p. 404). Thus, St Alphonsus de Liguori's (1696-1787) retreats to clergy, although he had a great personal love of the Exercises, were focused upon their needs and problems, as were the forms of meditation published by Bishop Antony Godeau in 1703 (Godeau, 1860; Liguori, 1888). Soon after he took charge of the Jesuits in 1829, General Roothaam issued instruction that they were to follow the Ignatian meditations far more strictly so that their retreatants knew the source of the spirituality which they were using

(Bangert, 1972, p. 436). For instance, the retreat addresses given by the Jesuit Fr Dingham in the nineteenth century followed very closely the pattern of the *Exercises*, coloured but not dominated by that special devotion to the Sacred Heart which the Jesuits were encouraging at that time (Dingham, n.d. c1895). In contrast however, his near contemporary Bishop Headley offered addresses to clergy which were more thematic, based upon the nature of the work of the priest, and including considerations of the Divine Office, the Holy Mass and Pastoral work, following in the tradition of retreat material produced by Liguori (Headley, 1918).

The first Anglican retreat given by Fr Benson followed closely the Ignatian pattern but very soon these were left behind to meet the needs of the people who came to hear him. Randall kept fairly close to Ignatius whereas King rejected this route. The pattern of many retreats was Creation, Sin, Judgement, Salvation, Eternal Life, but many others went into various aspects of the Christian life depending upon what the conductor felt were the needs of the moment. By the time we get to the era of Evelyn Underhill the pure Ignatian devotees are few and far between, and her addresses have subjects such as the Lord's Prayer or the Holy Communion. Her contemporary Edward Talbot gave very personal addresses on the devotional life of his hearers based on his own experience, and many followed his example. The same still applies today, except for those who give the retreat on a one-to-one basis follow the Ignatian model more rigidly.

Just as important as the pattern of meditations derived from the Bible has been the method of its use. Over the years it has at times been purely intellectual and dry as dust, and at other times emotional, but the emphasis these days in both the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches is to look for the response of the whole person. If the Bible passage is suitable, the retreatants are asked to use their imaginations to bring the passage to mind, their wills to place themselves in it as an active participant, their senses to help them share in it fully, their intellects to understand what they are doing and their emotions to feel what is happening to them and to react accordingly. In this way they are one with the life and ministry of our Lord, as if they were there, and can feel the results for themselves. They learn the parts of his life they are happy about, the sections in

which they are plainly disobedient and the parts they would like to follow but are too afraid. In this way the experience is live and fresh, but it will not do for all retreatants at every point of their life.

Thus the retreat theoretically follows a defined pattern, but in fact in both the Church of England and the Roman churches it is wider in scope depending upon the needs of the group who are gathered for it.

4. Retreat Houses

St Ignatius quickly realized that some people would need special provision for performing the *Exercises* and so rooms were set aside for them at Rome and other places in Jesuit colleges, even if they wished to experience them without any thought of joining the Society. In 1579 St Charles Borromeo (1538-84) erected a house to accommodate such individuals and by 1625 a house had been purchased at Maubeuge by the Abbot of Leisses near the Jesuit College for a similar purpose (de Guibert, 1972, p. 302). St Vincent de Paul started giving the *Exercises* to ordinands in 1628 and soon afterwards opened his house at Saint-Lazare, Paris, to all 'who wished to pass eight or ten days in prayer and recollection' (Coste, 1935a, pp. 253, 264). So the number of houses gradually increased, but when the revival in retreats happened during the 19th century there were not enough houses in Western Europe and much improvisation was needed (Debuchy, 1911). The principle was established of siting a retreat house close to the public which needed it.

Improvisation was equally needed when retreats began in England. Theological Colleges, large private houses and Religious Orders made their space available. By the early 1900s some dedicated houses existed, but the important surge came in the 1920s with the opening of Diocesan retreat houses and the development of Community houses. The Church of England has followed Catholic practice in providing dedicated retreat houses, but she has never had the large purpose-built establishments to be found on the continent or even like those erected in this country by the Cenacle sisters at the end of the nineteenth century. The only exception was Stacklands, but here the ambitious plans of the early members of SRC were never realised. Most of the houses are adaptations of what were large family houses with the attendant problems of

providing sufficient bedrooms and a suitable chapel. There has never been an equivalent to the intensive programmes of retreats and training which is going on now at Loyola Hall Spirituality Centre and St Beuno's.

This has had the advantage of creating a more homely atmosphere than some of the older Catholic houses which could, I understand, feel institutional. Some of the larger Catholic houses have been able to create prayer spaces with different characteristics, such as a simple room set aside for silent meditation, a provision not yet common in Anglican houses.

Retreat houses were financially insecure and many of them existed for a short time, but the better managed ones continued for longer. They are being kept going however by usage other than for retreats with all the subsequent problems. The future as we have seen may be the smaller ecumenical houses, or we may be back to the days of using whatever is available. After all, the observance of religious silence does not depend upon the house but upon the presence of the right conditions and the fundamental desire of the group.

Thus we see that Anglican practice followed that of the Church of Rome, keeping silence, having a properly authorised minister, using a recognisable pattern, and using a properly equipped retreat house, but at times followed its own course. There are other modifications to the practice of retreat in the Church of England, and we will look at these now.

B. Other Modifications

1. Anglican Worship

Although Anglican retreats for the first 100 years closely followed the Roman model of the preached retreat, the worship in diocesan retreat houses and at some religious houses was thoroughly Anglican and largely based upon the Book of Common Prayer. Apart from retreats held for extreme Anglo-Catholics, which differed little from their Roman counter-parts, Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary, the Rosary and Benediction did not feature in Anglican retreats. The sacrament of confession was available but not insisted upon. The use of the Prayer Book brought a distinctive ethos to the Anglican way of doing things,

counterbalancing the strong Ignatian roots of the retreat tradition with a continuing Benedictine influence. As Bede Mudge has put it:

The example and influence of the Benedictine Monastery, with its rhythm of divine office and Eucharist, the tradition of learning and *lectio divina*, and the family relationship among the Abbot and community were determinative for much of English Life.

He continues:

This devotional pattern was preserved through the spiritual and theological upheavals of the reformation. *The Book of Common Prayer* – the primary spiritual source-book for Anglicans – continues the basic pattern of Eucharist and the divine office as the principle public forms of worship and Anglicanism has been unique in this respect (quoted in Ball, 2007, p. 18).

Martin Thornton suggested that “the older spirituality” of Benedictinism...alone corresponds with English religion: it fits easily and naturally into a retreat based upon the Mass and twofold office; the Ignatian method does not’ (Thornton, 1963, p. 83). The reformed doctrine expressed by the Prayer Book, together with the longer scriptural lections which it employs and its self-conscious continuity with the Catholic past, has helped to produce that inclusive, scripturally based, reasoned and reasonable teaching which many Anglicans would claim to be their distinct gift to the wider church. In practice, the retreat day has often ended with the ancient non-Prayer Book words of the Office of Compline which have become greatly loved by generations of retreatants. Otherwise, Anglican retreats have been saturated until recently in the words of the Prayer Book. Nowadays, as the Daily Offices and patterns of Eucharist in the two communions come increasingly to resemble each other, the distinction is perhaps now not so marked.

Throughout the twentieth century, the retreat has been held in a typically Anglican chapel of the period. There would be no statues but it did have a decently dressed holy table, and often there was the Reserved Sacrament in an aumbrey to one side. Liturgical styles have changed and so the house chapels have changed to accommodate Westward celebration and to allow for more flexibility in the arrangement of the furniture. In these ways Church of England retreats have been shaped by its form of worship.

2. Official Church Approval

In the Roman Church, official approval has been given to the practice of retreat in a number of papal encyclicals, including *Mens nostra* published in 1929 by Pope Pius XI, which almost made St Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* church policy (Tetlow, 1999, p. 19). In contrast, although many individual Anglican bishops and semi-official documents have commended the practice, it has never become the official policy of the Church of England, and so its promotion has been left to voluntary groups. The first of these was the Society of the Holy Cross, which, as we noted in Chapter 2 made the first experiments and which for many decades afterwards organised and publicised retreats for clergy and for laity, although their work aroused some suspicion. Fr Embry, writing in 1931, recorded that Diocesan Members of SSC 'were frequently sought after as Conductors of Retreats, in fact, in the earlier days of the Movement, they might have been said to have possessed the monopoly of this work.' He further claimed with justifiable pride, 'The Retreat Movement in the English Church, which has spread so widely and which forms such a great and accepted part in her spiritual provisions, will always remain as one of the greatest memorials to SSC' (w/Embry, 1931).

From the early 1890's, lists of forthcoming retreats and of clergy who were willing to lead retreats were kept at Church House Westminster and published in the Church of England Year Book up to 1915, the nearest the practice has reached to official approval. A key moment was the recommendation of the building of diocesan houses in the *Evangelism Report* of 1918. In the years before this, some diocesan retreat committees were formed, notably one established as early as 1913 by Robert E Schofield covering the Dioceses of Manchester, Liverpool and Chester, which eventually established the retreat house Watermillock.

The committee which organised the great Anglo-Catholic Congresses in the 1920's was concerned to further the provision of retreat, and for a time gave grants to APR and to SRC. This latter group up to the end of the 1970's was the only body in the Church of England providing training in the giving of retreats using the Ignatian method (Ball, 2007, p. 83). However, its influence was very limited because it positioned itself within the extreme High-church wing of the

church, it would not countenance retreats which were not Ignatian, and because it was regarded by many as not moving with the times – an impression which was not true of all of its members.

The chief organisation developing the ministry has been the Association for Promoting Retreats founded in 1913. As we have seen, this moved on from owning retreat houses to becoming the body which co-ordinated the development of the practice throughout England. At first it was distrusted by diocesan groups, and ‘relationships with the dioceses were sometimes ambiguous’ (Lampard, 1993, p. 22), but gradually it became the focus for those engaged in the retreat movement. It has provided a journal, produced lists of retreats and retreat houses and published introductory leaflets, although rather amateurishly at first. It has given the movement a succession of figureheads in the shape of its organising secretaries and presidents, stretching from Alan Simpson and James Wareham through Bishop Mark Carpenter-Garnier and Penelope Eckersley to Canon Richard Buck and later Paddy Lane. It has trained and encouraged both retreat givers and retreat-house wardens, and called them together for national conferences. It fostered the growth of other denominational groups and in the end handed much of its authority over to the ecumenical Retreat Association. Most ordinary retreatants will probably never have heard of its existence, but behind the scenes – and sometimes in front of them – it has quietly done much to shape the Anglican Retreat Tradition. It is an example of how much the Church of England has relied upon groups of enthusiasts who have joined together in voluntary societies to carry forward its work of mission, education, social welfare and spiritual growth, sometimes despite the official structures of the church.

3. Proportion of Church people going on retreat

What proportion of church people in both churches made a retreat regularly? No statistics have been kept and so only an informed guess can be made.

All clergy, whether Catholic or Anglican, will have made a retreat at least twice in their life, namely at their ordinations. This is all Anglican clergy will

have needed to do as there is no rule of the church which says they must make it again. But some, particularly Anglo-Catholic clergy, will have attended more often but it will have been just a small proportion. In contrast, Roman Catholic clergy will have been obliged to go on retreat every two or three years since 1900. I understand though that this may have been a retreat in name only as it often took the form of a conference and that the social side loomed as large as the theological/spiritual part. In this sense, they have corresponded more to the diocesan conferences to which many Anglican bishops have called their clergy every other year, often held at holiday camps out of season. Therefore more Roman clergy will have made a retreat, but perhaps it is only a few which have made it a real spiritual experience. However, it is likely that the numbers attending will have favoured the Roman Catholic clergy.

Religious in both denominations have always been under obligation to attend a retreat but their numbers have always been more plentiful in the Church of Rome than in the Anglican Church. Indeed, the Roman retreat houses have been kept going by making provision for retreats for them. Therefore the percentage of religious attending retreats has been the same for both denominations but in actual numbers the religious have been larger in the Roman Catholic church than in the Anglican.

Amongst laity, the retreat has been a familiar idea in the Roman church for a longer time than in the Church of England and amongst the latter it has really only been well known in Anglo-Catholic circles. However, the number of Roman Catholics attending a retreat has not been all that high, and therefore I doubt if there has been much difference in practice.

In adopting the practice of holding retreats, the Anglican church followed Roman practice. But how far has the Church of England been persuaded by Catholic practice and how far has it been influenced by other factors?

C. How far due to Roman Catholic Influence and how far due to other influences

I will tackle this section by looking in turn at each of the three periods which this thesis has covered divided in turn. First, I will consider the initial adoption of the practice of retreat.

It was the desire of members of the Society of the Holy Cross to follow the way of St Vincent de Paul which first led some Anglicans to adopt the practice of retreat. St Vincent had tried to evangelise the poor people of France in the 17th century, and equally SSC were trying to meet the needs of the urban poor of this country in the 19th century, and part of his method included the adoption of the yearly retreat. Unfortunately Charles Lowder had no experience of one, so he and his companions did what they considered was best, but the first attempts were judged not to be successful as retreats because they were rather restless and lacking in peace. Therefore Richard Benson studied what was the practice on the Continent and came up with the Ignatian pattern as providing the best model for a retreat. In fact Ignatian retreats had already evolved into the preached retreat which was the norm in the Roman Catholic Church, and this was the way in which Anglican retreats were conducted in this country for the next hundred years.

This evolution was the Catholic reason for accepting it. However, the practice also fitted in with another simultaneous movement, namely the Romantic Movement. As we have seen, this emphasised the need for the irrational in our lives as opposed to the strict rationality of the eighteenth century. It was exhibited in the Christian church by outpourings of devotion and emphasised two things. The first was the need to grow spiritually and it was presumed that this growth happened gradually, as opposed to the Evangelical assumption that it all happened when one was converted. The practice of an annual retreat was seen to foster steady spiritual growth over a succession of years, each retreat taking the process further. The second was that a person came to know himself in silence and solitude, which is of the essence of the retreat method. Ignatius realized that for truths to stand a chance of being absorbed they

must be reflected on in quiet and so become part of a person's life. In a retreat the retreatant slowly reviews the Christian verities with the mind, imagination and will, making them his own, and letting them become the basis of his life.

Retreats were accepted in the middle of the nineteenth century because they were part of the Catholic life at that time and because they were a form of devotion which coincided with the need of some to see the Catholicity of the Church of England emphasised, but also because they fitted in with the insights of the Romantic movement.

The second step leading members of the Church of England to adopt the practice of retreat came about through the various articles written by Charles Plater, and especially his book *Retreats for the People*. In this, he reported the development of artisan retreats at that time on the Continent and convinced some people that this was a good way of converting the working classes to the Christian faith. This desire to win them for Christ was present through all the churches who had tried every possible method over the past half-century or more to contact them and change them. The way of converting them through their own kind appealed to the churches, but it did not succeed because it did not reflect working class aspirations. We still have not found a way of contacting them and any success which we may have is only with a few untypical people.

However the development of retreats continued for other reasons. The first, as we have seen, is the interest in mysticism, which opened up the possibility of the experimental faith which could be found in a retreat. The second was the need for quiet after the war, although this need was never as great as was thought at the time. The third was the rise of the Anglo-Catholic movement within the Church of England, which was the strongest cause for it produced men and women who went on retreat because it fitted in with their Catholic way of life. Indeed the rise and fall of the retreat movement coincides with that of the Anglo-Catholic wing of the church over the same period and, apart from the occasional low churchman who made his retreat, explains the trajectory of those attending. It is true that Plater gave the incentive, but the statistics for the period might have been much the same with out him, and for there reasons we cannot attribute it all to Roman Catholic influence.

Lastly, how far were the initiatives of Vatican II responsible for the rise and fall of the movement during the last period of our survey? These were important in the life of the Roman Catholic Church but they are symptomatic of the changes which were going on and not the reason for them. Changes in Western society, such as the freeing up of people's moral standards and a new image of themselves as being independent and self-responsible, would have happened anyway. Developments such as the role of women in the church, greater theological freedom and the perception of authority, fitted in with people's self-image and hence the way in which retreats were offered. Vatican II was the church's response to these changes and afterwards it was easier to include Anglicans in the development of the new spirituality and help the way forward for both churches, but it was not the cause of the churches' shift. Something like it was inevitable.

We have seen developments in the use of the *Exercises* in the Roman Catholic church which led to changes in their use in the Church of England. There was a wider use of them during the nineteenth century, particularly amongst laity, their employment in the early twentieth century as a means of evangelism of the working man and in the last half of that century their use to bring about personal growth. This was paralleled in the Church of England with their use amongst the working class of the early twentieth century and later with a growing army of those concerned about their personal development as individuals. But alongside this, we have seen the influence of the Romantic movement, a desire to become more Catholic in devotion, the growth of Anglo-Catholicism, of mysticism, and a desire to include the whole person in devotion. For some, these have proved to be sufficient reasons for the growth of the Anglican practice of retreat without looking directly to the Roman Catholic church.

D. Conclusion

After some mistakes, the Church of England in the shape of Fr Benson adopted the practice of retreat in July 1858, using the form of a preached retreat, which was to form its basis for the next 100 years. For the first 10 years, helped by Bishop Wilberforce and the Bishop of Salisbury, Walter Hamilton, the

practice became more widely available, and spread to include religious and laity. It was defended against Protestant attacks by William Lyall, Richard Benson and Canon T. Carter, the last two providing defences which would continue in use until 1915 when Dr A. W. Robinson and Revd Robert Schofield provided a more up-to-date rationale for it. One early gain was the gradual introduction from the 1880's onwards of a time of reflection before men were ordained to the sacred ministry, which has remained the custom to the present day. Despite the ministry of Evangelicals such as Bishop E. H. Bickersteth, and the quiet influence of High Churchman Bishop Edward King and others, it remained the preserve of a few mainly Anglo-Catholic clergy up to the nineteen-tens.

In the 1900s the Jesuit Charles Plater gave the practice much needed publicity as a way of evangelising the working classes, and the form of devotion became more readily available during the 1920's and 1930's as more retreat houses were opened with men like Alan Simpson and James Wareham leading the retreats. Evelyn Underhill became famous as a retreat conductor at this time. The increase in retreatants continued up to the 1960's, and an annual retreat was common amongst Anglo-Catholic parishes. Archbishop Michael Ramsey was an outstanding conductor during this period. From 1970 onwards the way in which retreats were lead diversified until today there are many ways of leading a retreat but there are probably fewer retreatants.

This was when and how the Church of England adopted and adapted the practice of retreat. How was the Roman Catholic practice of using the *Exercises* proceeding at the same time? After the *Exercises* were introduced by St Ignatius Loyola during the first half of the sixteenth century, this Catholic Reformation devotion became widely used from the middle of the seventeenth century due to men like St Francis de Sales and St Vincent de Paul. At this time, the Preached retreat was the norm. By the nineteenth century it was growing rapidly on the Continent, and towards the end of the century was adapted as a means of evangelism amongst the working classes. With the approval of Pope Pius XI by the beginning of the Second World War, spiritual exercises were almost officially identified with the Ignatian exercises (Tetlow, 1999, p. 19). However, problems were appearing in their use by 1970's and this led to a major

reconsideration of them by Jesuits. This caused a return to the original way of giving them which was on a one-to-one basis, and led to other ways of making a retreat.

How did this Roman background impinge on the Anglican practice? By the 1860's, the Romantic Movement had encouraged a trend which had existed ever since the days of the Oxford Movement involving the adoption amongst the Anglo-Catholics by the Church of England of ingredients of the Roman Catholic spiritual heritage, without submission to the Pope, including retreats. Inevitably this included the tradition of Ignatian retreats, and we have described above how closely this pattern was kept to, including the observance of silence, the conductor as an authorised priest, the Ignatian pattern of meditations the role of religious orders and the provision of retreat houses. However, also identified were non-Roman elements such as the use of Anglican forms of worship, and the fact that it never had the official approval of the Anglican church. Fr Charles Plater's influence upon the Church of England coincided with the importance of the desire for mystical experience and the growing influence of the Anglo-Catholic movement. During the 1970's the changed attitude of the Roman Catholic church towards non-Catholic churches meant that Anglicans were drawn into the reformations of the tradition almost from the start.

So what was the reason why the Anglican church adopted and adapted the Catholic Reformation tradition of retreat? There is in every denomination those clergy and lay people who are drawn to a deeper devotion through silence and these, relatively few, people will follow this urge whatever the origin of the devotion. The fact that it came into the Church of England through the Roman Catholic tradition is important in giving it a definite shape, but is not vital to the matter – it would have happened in some form anyway.

We can therefore draw the following conclusion. The Roman Catholic influence was very strong. It was the fact that the example of retreats as part of the rich devotion of the Catholic Reformation was there in the first place which gave the Church of England the model for its own retreats. Their development into a tool for evangelising the working class was an interesting side track but I suspect it was little more than that. The fact that Vatican II made possible the

development of retreats in the last half of the 20th century is significant but it may have come about anyway. The assumed hypothesis is only in part true but it has served a useful purpose in stimulating my research. The research question has been answered.

The principle of retreat, which had been an important part of the spiritual life of the pre-Reformation era, was taken by St Ignatius and turned into a tool for helping people make a firm decision for Christ. It was then found to be of value in building people up in the faith of the Roman Catholic Church, and some 400 years on was taken by the Anglo-Catholic movement into the Church of England for a similar purpose. Over the past 150 years, thousands of Anglicans have found it to be of value in strengthening their spiritual lives and it is still so today. Perhaps in the future we will approach it in more informal ways than we have in the past, but the basic technique of taking time out from our busy Christian lives to consider their direction is as important as ever. It always will be part of the basic Christian equipment, be it Roman Catholic, Anglican or another part of the rich sacramental fellowship which is the Church.

Appendix A. Retreat Programmes

I. Retreat for Clergy, July 5th – 10th 1856, The Home of Dr Pusey

| | |
|------------|---|
| 6.30 a.m. | Preparation for Holy Communion and Prime |
| 7.00 a.m. | Holy Communion at St Thomas's Thanksgiving and Terce |
| | Breakfast, with reading of 'a beautiful book with meditations for a Retreat like ours' |
| 10.00 a.m. | Attend Cathedral or Magdalene Chapel [for matins?] Private Prayer in a cemetery chapel Conference on conversion or confession or some book of the Fathers Dinner with spiritual reading. None and prayers at Cathedral A walk Tea Conference Reading Compline Bed |

Source:- Reconstructed from a letter to Charles Lowder's mother (Trench, 1881, p. 95).

Ila. Timetable for a Retreat held in a College Chapel

| | |
|------------|---|
| 6.45 a.m. | Prayer and Holy Communion in College Chapel. |
| 8.00 a.m. | Breakfast. |
| 8.30 a.m. | Morning Prayer in Church. |
| 10.00 a.m. | Prayer and address in Chapel, after which retire for Meditation or Spiritual Reading. |
| 1.00 p.m. | Prayers in Chapel. |
| 1.15 p.m. | Dinner. |
| 3.00 p.m. | Prayer and Address in Chapel; after which retire as before till 6.p.m. |
| 6.00 p.m. | Tea. |
| 6.30 p.m. | Evening Service in Church. |
| 7.15 p.m. | Address in Chapel; after which retire as before. |
| 9.00 p.m. | Refreshment in College Hall. |
| 9.15 p.m. | Prayers in Chapel, and retire for night. |

(Benson, 1867, p. 50).

IIb. The Subjects of Benson's Addresses at the First Retreat

| | Subject | Fruit of Meditation |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Tuesday things | The end of man | Indifference to all created |
| | Sin | Hatred of sin |
| | Death | Extirpation of sin |
| | Judgement | Knowledge of self |
| Wednesday | The Kingdom of Christ | Desire to imitate God |
| | The Incarnation | Humility |
| | The Birth of Christ | The love of poverty |
| | The Passion and Death of Christ | Love of mortification |
| Thursday Christ's enemies | The Two Standards | Resolve to fight against |
| | The gift of the Holy Spirit | The life of faith |
| | Christ in Glory | Hope |
| | God, the satisfying end of man | Love of God |

(after Smith, 1991, p. 109).

III. July 18th – 21st 1860. Retreat for priests at Cuddesdon College, led by Canon T. T. Carter

First Day

Meet in Cuddesdon College at 6.00 p.m. on Wed. July 18th.

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 6.30 p.m. | Evening Service |
| | Tea and conversation |
| 9.00 p.m. | Prayer in Chapel. Explanatory Address. Retire |

Second and Third days.

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 6.45 a.m. | Prayer and Holy Communion in College Chapel |
| 8.00 a.m. | Breakfast |
| 8.30 a.m. | Service in Chapel |
| 9.30 a.m. | Short address with prayers in Chapel |
| 10.15 a.m. | Retire for prayer and meditation or spiritual reading till 12 |
| 12.00 noon to 1.00 p.m. | Unoccupied with special retreat work |
| 1.00 p.m. | Litany in Chapel |
| 1.15 p.m. | Dinner |
| 2.15 p.m. | Prayer and short address in Chapel |
| 3.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. | Unoccupied. |
| 6.00 p.m. | Tea. |
| 6.30 p.m. | Service in Church. |
| 7.15 p.m. | Short address in Chapel. |
| 8.00 p.m. | Retire as before. |
| 9.00 p.m. | Refreshment will be prepared in the college hall. |

9.15 p.m. Prayer and retire for the night.

Fourth Day.

6.45 a.m. Prayer and Holy Communion. Concluding address.
8.30 a.m. Breakfast.
9.00 a.m. Service in Church
10.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. Retire for prayer, after which the meeting
will be ended

The prayers will be taken from those in use in Cuddesdon College (Parker, Oxford), and Bishop Cosin's Hours.

Books recommended are Sherlock's Practical Christian; Andrew's Devotions; Bp Chrysostom on the Priesthood; Wilson's Sacra Private; Bishop of Oxford's Lectures to Candidates for Ordination; Pinart's Meditations in the Suffering Life of Christ; Memoriale Vite Sacredotilis; Bishop of Brechin's Meditations. It is earnestly requested that all communication be of a grave, edifying and subdued character. 'Quinon accum colligit, dispergit'.

(Source:- Wilberforce 1881, p. 44).

[I assume that the services in church are Morning and Evening Prayer; if so, Carter had adapted the monastic model used in the first experiments to the Anglican pattern of two offices a day. With some small amendments, this programme was still the basis of clergy retreats in the 1950s].

IV. Timetable of the first parish retreat, Vauxhall 1867

7.00 a.m. Holy Communion and Meditation
9.30 a.m. Matins
10-11.15 a.m. In Church. Self-examination or spiritual reading
11.15 a.m. Celebration and quarter hour meditation
3.30 p.m. Litany and quiet in church until 8.00 p.m.
8.00 p.m. Evensong and meditation
(Hannam, n.d. notes 3).

V. Retreat for Laymen at Compstall Hall (Roman Catholic), 1909

Order of the Day

6.30 a.m. Rise; Morning Prayer in Chapel; Instruction in Chapel
7.15 a.m. Mass
7.45 a.m. Breakfast; Recreation
9.45 a.m. Free time in Room or Grounds
10.15 a.m. Visit to Chapel; Public Prayers

Borrowed Silence

| | |
|------------|---|
| 10.30 a.m. | Spiritual Reading (<i>Imitation of Christ</i>) in Rooms or Grounds |
| 10.45 a.m. | Free Time |
| 11.30 a.m. | Instruction in the Chapel, Meditation in Rooms |
| 12.30 p.m. | Free Time |
| 12.45 p.m. | Visit to Chapel. Private Prayer and Preparation for Confession |
| 1.00 p.m. | Dinner; Recreation |
| 3.00 p.m. | Visit to Chapel, Stations of the Cross, Free Time in Rooms or Grounds |
| 4.00 p.m. | Instruction in the Chapel; Reflection in Room or Grounds |
| 4.45 p.m. | Tea, Free Time |
| 5.15 p.m. | Rosary in the Chapel |
| 5.30 p.m. | Spiritual Reading in Room or Grounds |
| 6.15 p.m. | Instruction in the Chapel. Meditation in the Rooms |
| 7.15 p.m. | Benediction |
| 7.30 p.m. | Supper; Recreation |
| 9.00 p.m. | Night Prayer in Chapel; Examination of Conscience |
| 9.15 p.m. | Instruction in Chapel. Retire to rest |
| 10.00 p.m. | Lights Out |

N.B. 1. All are earnestly requested to observe silence strictly, except during the time (after breakfast dinner and supper) allotted to recreation when those who wish may commune either in the grounds or in the hall.

2. Promptitude in beginning all the duties, especially those in Chapel, is earnestly urged upon all.

3. Free Time may be spent in one's room, in the grounds, or in the Chapel.

4. If anything is needed, application should be made to the Father Superior.

(Lunn, 1913, p. 267).

VI. Timetable for a 7 Day personal individual Retreat

| | |
|------------|---|
| 6.30 a.m. | Rise, Ablutions |
| 7.30 a.m. | Holy Eucharist |
| 8.15 a.m. | Breakfast |
| 9.00 a.m. | Centring Down |
| 9.30 a.m. | Prayer, Scripture, Meditation, morning theme |
| 10.30 a.m. | Coffee/Juice and walk |
| 11.00 a.m. | Creative/manual work (journaling etc.) |
| 12.00 noon | Passive Surrender before altar |
| 1.00 p.m. | Lunch and rest |
| 2.30 p.m. | Walk (either simply open to God or practising awareness meditation on the Jesus Prayer) |
| 4.30 p.m. | Light Tea |

Borrowed Silence

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 5.00 p.m. | Centring Down |
| 5.30 p.m. | Prayer, Scripture, Meditation, evening theme. |
| 7.00 p.m. | Supper |
| 8.00 p.m. | Music (listening or making), walk, dance, write journal |
| 9.30 p.m. | Compline, followed by period of resting in God. Retire |

(from Ramon, 1987, p. 224).

VII. Individually Guided Retreat at Stacklands Retreat House

Monday March 29th - April 2nd.

Monday

| | |
|-----------|--|
| | Supper |
| 8.00 p.m. | Introductory Meeting in Library, followed by Compline in Chapel. |

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

| | |
|------------|-------------------------|
| | Breakfast |
| | Individual Direction |
| 12.15 p.m. | Holy Communion |
| | Lunch |
| | Tea |
| | Supper |
| 8.30 p.m. | Silent Prayer in Chapel |

Friday

| | |
|-----------|----------------|
| 8.00 a.m. | Holy Communion |
| | Breakfast |
| | Depart |

(From the author's notes).

VIII. Angela Ashwin's Retreat at Launde Abbey, Tuesday 28th to Friday 31st October 2008

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS – GLORY AND CHALLENGE

Tuesday

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 6.30 p.m. | Supper |
| | Introductory Session (in Conference or Sitting Room) |
| | Opening Address in Chapel: The Beloved Son |
| | Night Prayer. |

SILENCE BEGINS

Wednesday

| | |
|-----------|----------------|
| 7.45 a.m. | Morning Prayer |
| 8.15 a.m. | Eucharist |

Borrowed Silence

| | |
|------------|--|
| 8.45 a.m. | Breakfast |
| 10.00 a.m. | Address: Glory! Chapel |
| 11.00 a.m. | Coffee |
| 12.30 p.m. | Midday Office |
| 1.00 p.m. | Lunch |
| 4.00 p.m. | Tea |
| 4.30 p.m. | Address: A Quality of Attention – Chapel |
| 5.30 p.m. | Evening Prayer |
| 6.30 p.m. | Supper |
| 9.15 p.m. | Our group's Night Prayer – Chapel |

Thursday Similar but

| | |
|------------|---|
| 10.00 a.m. | Address: Pain in Christ's Glory |
| 4.30 p.m. | Address: Treasure in Earthen Vessels |
| 7. 45 p.m. | Optional listening and sharing session – Conference or Sitting Room |

Friday

| | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| 7.45 a.m. | Morning Prayer – Chapel |
| 8.15 a.m. | Eucharist – Chapel – SILENCE ENDS |
| 8.45 a.m. | Breakfast and depart |

[Retreatants are given a sheet of relevant quotations. Meditation made together in Chapel.]

(Carol Brennand email 27/08/09).

Appendix B. Interviewees

Face-to-face

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Janet and Gordon Arthur | Lay | 06/01/2009 |
| Tim Blewett | Clergy and RHW | 30/10/2008 |
| Carolyn Chadwick | Clergy | 17/03/2009 |
| Henry Evans | Clergy and ex-RHW | 08/10/2008 |
| Sue Field | Clergy | 17/04/2009 |
| Coral and Derek Halums | Lay | 16/09/2008 |
| David Hewlitt | Clergy | 30/04/2005 |
| Paula Hollingsworth | Clergy | 16/09/2008 |
| Thelma Hughes | Lay | 22/10/2008 |
| Benjamin Humphries | Clergy | 27/10/2009 |
| Graham Johnson | Clergy and ex-RHW | 06/10/2008 |
| Mary Lister | Deacon | 09/08/2008 |
| Dorothy Nicholson | Clergy | 07/10/2008 |
| Philip Norwood | Clergy and Retreatant | 05/11/2008 |
| Mary Pat | Nun | 11/03/2009 |
| Harold and Evelyn Smith, Shirley Lee | Lay | 18/12/2008 |
| Inga Walker | Lay | 08/12/2008 |

Email

| | | |
|------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Carol Brennand | Clergy | 25/03/2009 |
| Robin Long | Lay | 12/09/2008 |
| Charles Ruxton | Clergy + RH | 06/12/2008 |
| Yvonne Silver | Lay | 14/09/2008 |
| Andrew Talbot-Ponsonby | Clergy | 19/03/2009 |
| Richard Thorneycroft | Lay | 27/01/2009 |
| Irene Vickers | Lay | 12/03/2009 |

There are also nine anonymous forms given out at Conference on Retreats, which are difficult to summarise.

Of these all these interviewees, four of those interviewed personally were still working, and the rest are of retirement age; of those interviewed by email three are still working, and of those who filled in questionnaires, one was in the 45-55 age group, four in the 55-65 age group and four had retired. They were all articulate people.

They were chosen because of their accessibility, and because they had an expressed interest in retreats. Two had never been on retreat, but one of these was on a Retreat House management committee.

Bibliography

a. The Archives of the Society of Retreat Conductors

These are kept at The Company Offices,
The Society of Retreat Conductors
St Mary Woolnoth Vestry
Lombard Street
London, EC3V 9AN

Box 3

| | |
|------|--|
| CM1 | Minute Book of Chapter Minutes, 1923-1934 |
| CM2 | Minute Book of Chapter Minutes, 1935-1955 |
| CM3 | Minute Book of Chapter Minutes 1955-56; Committee Minutes 1956-1959; Council Minutes 1950-1967 |
| CM4 | Council Minutes 1968-1998 Stacklands House Committee Purchase of Stacklands Estate 1928-1935 |
| FSRC | Minutes of Fellowship of the Society of Retreat Conductors 1929-1955 |

Box 5

| | |
|-----|---|
| AGM | Minutes of Annual General Meetings 1925-1996 |
| MR1 | Mass Register 1929-1945 |
| MR2 | Mass Register 1945-1956 Building Fund 1933-1940 |
| RR | Retreat Register 1925-1971 List of Members 1925-1928 Minutes of Development Group 1994-2005 |

Cardboard Box (CB)

| | |
|-----|--------------------------|
| PC | Press Cuttings 1914-1974 |
| SB1 | Scrap Book 1980-1985 |
| SB2 | Scrap Book 1986-1989 |
| SB3 | Scrap Book 1989-1991 |
| SB4 | Scrap Book 1991-1996 |
| SB5 | Scrap Book 1997-1998 |

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